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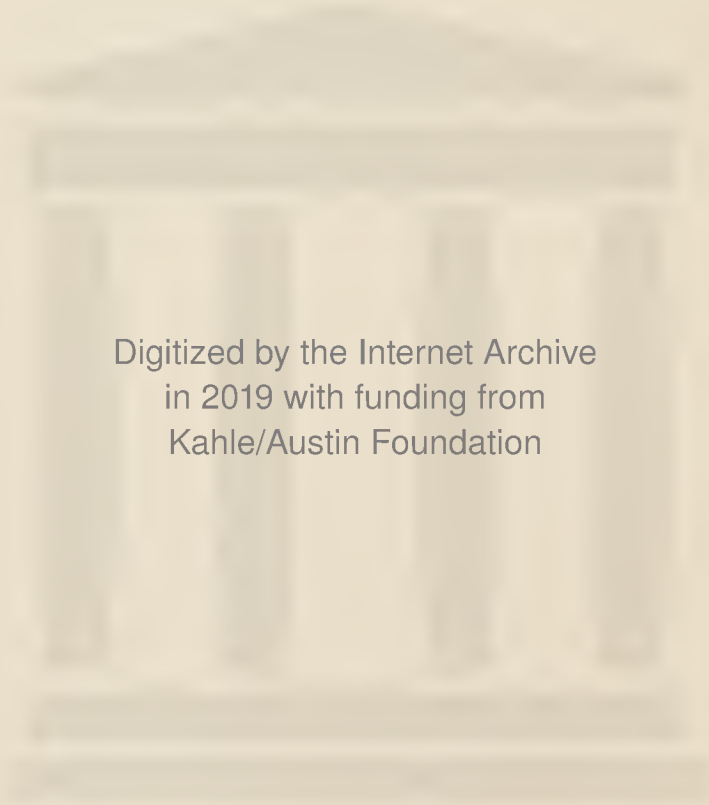

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A WINTER MISCELLANY

edited and compiled by
HUMBERT WOLFE

to which are added
original poems

by

THE EDITOR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	7
Prologue	37
Countryman's Winter	41
Traveller's Winter	87
Soldier's and Sailor's Winter	131
Reveller's and Fireside Winter	165
Sportsman's Winter	205
The Poet's Winter	241
God and Mary's Winter	317
Epilogue	349

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A WINTER MISCELLANY

A DEFENCE

THERE is, I thought, no possible excuse for a further anthology, and if there were, no possible subject, and, if a subject, I am the last person to attempt it. For, if I compare myself with professors of literature, I am not merely ignorant, I do not exist. Those wise ones—of all ages—are born knowing who fished the murex up, and what porridge ate John Keats. They know the names, works, and characters of Elizabethan novelists, as of the romantic playwrights of Queen Anne. The obscure files of the eighteenth century periodicals unknown to contemporaries are stored in their minds as though they were a Public Register Office. Indeed, they are that and the British Museum beside, and the courteous officials who can show the un-Dickens-like aspirant the eight relevant passages in Boethius (or is it Savonarola or Lars Porsena of Clusium) on Chinese Metaphysics. These, I thought, are the lads to anthologize; they are God's pickers and stealers. All periods and brains are alike to them. They bulge with superiority over the amateur, and the crumbs dropped from their table are all, or should be, radium.

Do not, I said to myself, shifting uneasily on the tree-stump, expose yourself to their just contempt. For even if, as you were minded, you complete your reading in the matter of the sponge as a symbol of artistic integrity you, born of the unreceptive loofah tribe, must still fall short of rotundity. Though you grubbed up the sponges (if any) that encumbered the floods of slow Simois, and described the ceremony adopted by the acolyte permitted to mollify the brazen countenance of Ra, you will

inevitably omit some vital, perhaps Persian, aspect of sponginess. Is there no reference, for example, to sponges in Manilius or in the hitherto undiscovered writings of the Princess Murasaki, and is it certain that Tycho Brahe was indifferent to sporiferae? These are obvious dangers, I confessed, that confront and should intimidate the practically illiterate anthologist. Besides, I said, what is above all needed is scholarship, and self-conscious gravity. One should devote one's life not merely to describing but to being a sponge. I kicked uneasily at the snow and cocked a disturbed eye at the pines furtively sliding their brilliant burden to earth. Sponges, I muttered discontentedly to the crisp Alpine air. And professional writers, I added humbly. And scholarship, I almost prayed. And Hell, I shouted.

I shouted because I do know about winter, as though I were a snowflake or a frond traced overnight on the attic-window at Oak Mount. I don't see, I thought resentfully, how even Sir Edmund Gosse who knew a little about everything, and not much about anything, could have outpointed me on winter. Did he, the suave old grammarian, ever sledge down from the Heaton gates in Manningham Park, or down Emm Lane by moonlight and all but run into a steam-tram in Frizinghall Road? O dim far Cresta run of boyhood with the gaunt street lamps, a little gruff with the moon, and the snow to be rolled in like silver hay. What was it that Mr. Tordoff said as he adjusted the runners—Mr. Tordoff, a French polisher, who never polished anything except the edge of a beer-mug, Mr. Tordoff, who shaved every Whit-Monday as a concession to Lord Avebury, Mr. Tordoff, who chewed and spat out the lotus somewhere behind Lumb Lane. Well what was it that Mr. Tordoff said? 'Tha'll 'ave t'pool t' sled oop agen', said Mr. Tordoff sadly, but without malice. And how true, Mr. Tordoff, or, as my mother preferred to call him, Mr. Tordroff. But then, consider Mr. Tordoff, how odd Emm Lane looked under the snow and under the moon. Let us suppose, as I freely claimed at the time and afterwards, that the average speed of the

descent was 120 miles an hour, one could spare an hour or so for the long way back. Particularly with the snow smouldering under one's unaccustomed feet. You had heard of Henty, Mr. Tordoff, because I used to discuss his literary quality with you as long ago as in the high kitchen at 4, Mount Royd. We agreed, I think, that with the possible exception of the author of *The Rajah of Dah* he was the superlative performer of our time. You did indeed permit yourself to wonder whether, as Henty indicated, all the principal events of history had been moulded by the opportune intervention and counsel of boys of sixteen. But that slight doubt appeased, you did not deny our Henty's pre-eminence. And that Christmas, as you would remember if you had not died, Mr. Tordoff, was the 'Cat of Bubastes' year. Very Egyptian under the stars was Emm Lane, and very like a great cat the moon with a snow-fragrant purr accepting sledge-worship. Yes, you were right, Mr. Tordoff, we had to pull the sledge up that long ascent. But it didn't, do you know, matter, because boyhood's Eurydice came with us and never looked back at the top. Not though across the deep and snowbound valley there were high frosted lights forecasting other and higher lights on the Salève, at Caux or higher still at Aix.

Nor was that, I reflected, as the skiers arrogantly taxied past me in costumes as pixy as dragon-flies of elfland, nor was that my only claim to collect winter all over again. When Mr. Van Koppen was asked by Count Caloveglia or Bishop Heard what his idea of heaven was he replied reflectively 'Something with girls in it.' For me with equal certainty it would be something with mountains in it. For there's another mountain-winter that eminently reclaims me. At Harlech from the golf-links one regards with a slight trouble at the heart the Cambrian range. Four o'clock in the afternoon and the last sun spilling in the snows of what may well be (since I know no better) Y Wydda the White. High as that cold company moves the romantic shadow of Aylwin searching for his Winifred. In vain Stanley Flitch and

Geoffrey Burton invite me rather to beat upon the golf-ball with the suitable mace than to make snow-adventures with my eyes. And yet why not? Never was ball better played than as though to some secret hill-music, and so drive the dog-leg hole straight for the trees and not cowardly and safe to the left along the hedge. Because in any case there will be the long push-bicycle ride back to the Mwddach Estuary and Cader Idris in some silent conspiracy with his attendant clouds. Yes, we may ride back through the evening, and the young voices will ring clearly upon the air telling one another that this is better than term-time, and that there'll be hot whisky when we get in, and not to coast down that hill because there's a bridge and a twenty-foot drop into the stream at the bottom. Too late, because in any case the brake is gone, but we are not yet for the dark, any of us. (Though one of us has since coasted down a more fatal hill in Flanders, and one walks alone where all voices are old, and muted on an uneasy air.) Then Cader Idris across the water and a few first snowflakes falling. I have forgotten the name of the parson who came like the man in the moon with his lanthorn through the snow to dine with us. But I have not forgotten the flakes softly batting at the windows and how when the parson in his black clothes struggled down the steep path he looked in the swaying light of his lantern like the raven returning despondently to the Ark over a white interminable waste.

But it grows cold at 4,000 feet when the sun has gone, and I had better make for the hotel. The sigh of the snow drifting down between the needles stops suddenly, as the cold arrests that movement. All night the trees will be lapped in that feathery coverlet, and they'll not notice if Hans Andersen's Snow-Queen herself rides through the sleeping aisles.

And here, I thought, striding out in the path by the side of the funicular railway, is my third claim to compose an anthology of winter (though, in fact, until I met Kelleher some weeks later no such thought actually crossed my mind, or only a vague hint that

it might be fun to see if one couldn't be upsides with this winter business.) And surely I had a claim. Emm Lane and Y Wydda had anticipated this more exalted death of the year but only as heralds might a king. It grew dark quickly so that I had to walk slowly in snow rapidly changing to ice, and this gave me time to remember, as I thought happily of warm rooms and a change of clothes, winter withindoors when perhaps in place of this snow-hush before the Nativity there was a sound of Yorkshire voices violently (and a little inappropriately) inviting the inhabitants of 4, Mount Royd to awake in their capacity as Christians.

The professors who, if provoked, will say anything, assure us that the Christmas Tree is a glistering symbol of Ygdrasil—the Scandinavian monster that has the world for a glass-ball on its branches. It may be so, but it was not for that reason that the locked door of the sitting-room was almost unbearably exciting from five to half-past-six o'clock on Christmas Eve. When my father was alive he and my mother occupied themselves most of the night of the 23rd in decorating the tree, and arraying the tables. There were 12 tables—1 each for the parents, 2 for the aunts, 5 for the children, and 3 for the maids. And sometimes two additional ones if Mr. and Mrs. Tordoff's annual record was deemed worthy. Each had its white table-cloth and in the middle its plate heaped with chocolates, raisins, figs, and oranges. The candles on the tree were lighted at 6.30 exactly, and the door opened very much, as I imagine, the door flew wide for Mr. Standfast with each candle-flame like the cool voice of a trumpet. O Tannenbaum wie grün sind deine Blätter—O fir-tree, I thought among the snow-lovely pines, green indeed and everlasting your needles. You do not change either in time or in the heart, and in your presence we are all figures in Hans Andersen. As I wrote, I thought, one June night when the train was speeding through the gathering Danish twilight:

O little fir-tree of Denmark, I passed you by, but I guessed
What star of an unborn Christmas waited against your breast—

Somewhere the glass-balls are waiting, and the unlit candles glisten
Somewhere, and somewhere the children unborn are singing! O listen!
And though, when your Christmas is over, you must be despoiled in the garden,
Yet there is nothing to rail at, fir-tree, nothing to pardon.

It is all Hans Andersen, I thought, the bearded gentle father, the flushed gold-headed mother, the five dark children, the young aunts, and the strong Northern faces of the maids with no light except the candle flame reflected in glass-balls and in silver-tissue. O Tannenbaum!

And for me at Mount Royd (which I left in my tenth year) the candles lit always a new coloured fairy-book—yellow, red, blue, green—oh the whole palette of immortal Andrew Lang. Christmas Day—even if there were snow lying on the ground—there was no skating or sledging even for Jewkins. So that I might crouch in a deep chair behind the tree and read the record of Graciosa and Percinet, some adventure of Kraken, or ascent of the hill of glass. Greatly daring, if there was none to prevent me, I would strike a match and set fire to a few needles. I have never forgotten that sweet resinous smell. I have come to believe that it was implicit in the text, and that Andrew, by virtue of his long association with magic, had been endowed with some wizardry that could affect the printed page. No wonder then, I thought, as I crawled up the precipitous drive to the hotel, that winter has its special meaning for me.

I looked back as I beat the snow and ice from my woolly jerkin. A little wind was rustling through the lower wood of firs, and the snow began to stir restlessly. I went up to my room to change. All was quiet and warm, and I ought to have gone down to the hotel dinner. Because the rule was strict, and any guest more than half-an-hour late must face the consequences. I faced the consequences and had some sausage and beer at eleven. My

window was open, and though there was no clear moon, the stars hung like candles. The fir-trees bent their green heads under their surplices and it seemed to me that I could almost hear the whisper of the Confessional. I wrote, sitting at the window, and seeing the quiet Lords of heaven across the lake browsing at peace:

It is winter in the mountains
  where the wind confesses the firs.
They have put on the veil the green ones
  the slender, the whisperers.

'I loved the sun, and I gave him
  all that he asked,' said this.
'Is it sin?' 'It is sin' said the North wind
  'to be ashamed of the kiss.'

'I was taller than my sisters,' said that.
  'Is it sin to be proud?'
'It is sin,' said the wind, 'to be lovely
  and to go with the fair head bowed.'

'But the hare leaped over my branches,'
  said the smallest. 'Have I sinned?'
'Suffer the little fir-trees
  to come unto me,' said the wind.

O Tannenbaum!

I had put Switzerland and the firs far behind me and resumed my (I hope and believe) decent Civil Service exterior when about a month later I dined with Kelleher at the corner-house which he frequents in London. K. was flushed with the triumph of having brilliantly completed his Anthology of Carols for Benn's series of Sixpenny Poets which I was editing. It seemed on listening to him as he sat there, like an amiable if small volcano in happy eruption, that you just said Anthology overnight, and next morning it came in with the tea. I ought to have known better. Indeed, I did know what labour and what knowledge have gone to the creation of his tiny volume. But I am easily

intoxicated by good conversation, and bad beer, of which I had had plenty. In an unhappy moment I permitted myself to record my weakness for winter. Kelleher looked at me almost with awe. I've exercise books full of winter, he said. Just take and read them and you'll have it—a grand cold book like icicles on toast. Well, I said helplessly, they'd melt. They would not, of course, said he, because it would be cold toast, some of it from the Stone Age, or nearly. You'd want to be frozen to the marrow of your bones with all the winters from the time Adam said 'And what in the name of glory was that?' when the first hail-stone hit him. But Kelleher, I wouldn't want to approach the thing wholly as a study in temperature. There might be, mightn't there, a little literary or even human interest? Is it human, Humbert, and where would you find anything more human than having the fingers bitten off you with the cold? Thrilling for a meteorologist, K, but not somehow what I'm particularly seeking. The simple truth is that I've got a mind that acquires without hoarding. I'm sure that I've read enough about winter to fill an encyclopaedia, and if you ask me to quote three lines in support I can only remember my own attempt to reproduce the sound of falling snow in:

As in the light of the candles the fiddle renounces
death and the dark for dancers, and conjures mad heartsease,
so, when the moon smokes upward, with rustling flounces
the snow to some starry rebeck swan-glidingly curtsies.

Whisper the satins of the dark Genoese;
soft sigh on the air pale laces from France,
swayingly deep, till the winter shatters peace
with adventure's beautiful violence.

But there's more to it, Humbert, than the noise of snowflakes. Did you never think how all this green is a flash of a dark lantern only between one ice-age and the next? I have a list written down of times when that old dragon poked his head through again.

I'll read it to you, if you'll come back with me. But what use, said I on the top of the bus, would a list of dates be to anyone except an examiner on the incidence of frost? The winter I want is the winter of Emm Lane, of Harlech, of St. Cergue and Hans Andersen. Why should I give a damn because one year the cold froze the gold door-handle off the gate of heaven? Here, said Kelleher scrabbling among a heap of red exercise books, is your answer:

763. A prolonged frost in the East. The Black Sea froze. The walls of Constantinople were partly destroyed by the thaw.
860. Six months frost. The Adriatic Sea was frozen over.
1124. In Brabant eels from the marshes made their way into the barns for shelter.
1234. Carriages drove along the Adriatic outside the Lido at Venice.
1323. The Mediterranean entirely frozen over.
1408. Most of the bridges in Paris wrecked by the ice. The Greffier du Parlement complained that he could not take a note of the proceedings because the ink froze on his quill.
1544. Frozen wine was sold by weight in Paris.

What enchanting eels, K. I see them like a procession of black pot-hooks and hangers wreathing themselves across the white copybook page of the snow. But as to the Greffier du Parlement it's my belief that the man was a liar, because I don't suppose ink had been invented at the time. In which case—Will you be quiet then, Humbert. You'll never overtake winter by making little jokes about it. Its a serious season. Very well then, K. I will immediately write to the publisher and say 'My dear Jerrold, I am happy to tell you that all is well with *The Winter Miscellany*. It is, I am happy to assure you, to be a wholly serious book about Brabant eels and frozen ink. It will become the standard work on meteorology. Mr. Negretti and Mr. Zambra will probably subscribe the whole edition. I have discussed the matter

with Kelleher. He tells me that he has exercise-books full of references to temperature. I have seen the tail-end of several relevant items whisking round the corner of his mind on the way to break the ice—or for a drink. I do not know what they are going to drink—probably frozen beer sold by weight. I will, however, before going to Press, clear up the point with K. Hoping that this finds you as it leaves me.' Which, Humbert, is exactly what I'm going to do. This isn't Ally Sloper's Annual that you're compiling nor nothing like it. Haven't they been telling you for years that it was time you stopped fooling? Fooling is it, K., as you'd say yourself, and how could I do anything else? I've got to dodge the professors somehow. And if its winter, what's the matter with snowballs? But you're right all the same, because the cold hands of the frost are ill to shake, and if we make fun of that grim threat its euphemism, like calling the sea that the Greeks dreaded the Friendly to Travellers. The trouble with me is that I've a passion for arrangement, and I simply don't know how to arrange winter. I can't have it tumbling all over the place like a blizzard. There are all sorts of winters and I want them classified as, for example, hard, middling and soft winters. Or—Or Humbert, winters as all sorts of people have known them—tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief. My God, K., you're right, and so is Jerrold. It ought to be winter as it strikes the consciousness of men who face it out of doors, and those who face it within doors, those who go out to look for it, and those who are driven out into it, those who have made a tune of it and those for whom it has been the Star of Christmas. In other words, Humbert, the countryman's winter, the traveller's, the soldier's and sailor's, the reveller's, the sportsman's, the poet's, and last of all God and Mary's. And there's your book!

Why, yes, there's my book, I thought, as I returned pensively on the bus from the neighbourhood of St. Pancras. It was, as it suitably happened, a night of January, and as I sought to group

my winters I remembered one more—a London winter that I had not cared to mention even to my enquiring spirit. Cornwall Road and Mrs. Lummus can no doubt be attained by swift roaring motors. That immense distance has, like all others, shrunk—and widened. For there's no way there, I thought, except by the stumbling shambling horse-bus—and there are no horse-buses now. It was my first winter in London, and Saturday evening. Down Edgware Road, bright as a fair, Drum and I drove on the way to the mature delights of Piccadilly. There was, in particular, a lady, villainously ugly as I recall, but amazingly talented in the enunciation of the following song:

> You shall live in a Chalet
> Down in the valley
> Where the edelweiss in spring-time grows,
> And no-one shall ever
> Our two fond hearts sever
> If you'll marry me, my Alpine Rose.

Drum and I did not pause to consider the inherent improbability of edelweiss growing in a valley, or that we had better be conning over the notes with which Mr. Wren had provided us. Not we! Oxford Street stretched as shining as Excalibur, and the great central arc-lamps sparkled keen with frost against the hilt. We were not going to throw that brand away for any King Arthur of them all. We had, I imagine, about £1 5s. 7d. between us. That would pay for dinner at the Trocadero if we were not bullied by the stern eye of the waiter into ordering wine—and two upper circles. A man I know—somewhere in the middle forties—tells me that the Trocadero is a restaurant very like another, except that it is noisier. He says—this man with twenty books to his discredit and heaven knows what unfathomable mountains of official minutes—that it is the haunt of tiresome young men, who laugh loudly together, and look at him meaningly when he walks with decent gravity to his table, subduing the youngish waiter with his experienced mannerism. He may

be right—this creature—but Drum and I did not think so, and if only Drum had not, like the scholar-gipsy, fled our tears and smiles, he would have been the one to confute and abash the man. For on that cold night we deliciously stamped the cold out of our feet, and slipped down the narrow steps into the grill-room as into a warm bath. The band were brazenly roaring:

In my cosy corner shady
  Where I sit with my dearest lady
My head's in a whirl
As I stroke every curl
  Of my cosy corner gu-url.

Outside the wind might beat up the first snow-flake, but within it was the time of the boar's head and peacock-pie with all the feathers arow. The table is one of those in the alcove. If we two had been distinguished for anything but affection for one another the proprietor might well have hammered a brass plate to the wall saying 'Here on a winter evening of 190– two young men dined together for 9s. 6d. (excluding the tip).

'In some cool valley, as I guess
beneath a hill in Lyonesse.'

Drink a glass of beer to their memory.' But there will be no such plate, I thought

'Well Alphonse, well madam, well Marguerite,
they've no more use for us in Wardour Street.'

But haven't they?

So the more soberly I began to take the measure of the task which I laid upon myself. In all my desultory reading, I reflected, there's precious little either in prose or verse that isn't common to all readers anywhere. I don't see how I'm to make anything of it, however arranged, that will justify still one more collection, which, however described, will still be regarded as an anthology. Let me, for example, consider the countryman's winter. What can I remember in all literature of it except half a page in the Georgics? Because if the thing's to have any value, it must be a

personal view of each section. I mean that I must record winter not from the points of view of several types of people, but as though I myself were the several types. Which means chiefly poetry, because prose is all apples to me—Von Koppen's apples, I mean, sour potatoes. But, of course, there's Gilbert White, bless him! and William Cowper and John Clare. Their countryman's winter really is mine, because all my youth I wanted to creep back and see how the country looked when it wasn't all dressed up for visitors. I remember when I was about ten reading 'Vauxhall Gardens by Day' in *Sketches by Boz*. Lord! I wondered, will the country be like that in winter—all tables piled up on one another and crumbs on the floor? Do seven maids with seven mops go round industriously in March anticipating the spring, and is their hair in curl-papers, and do they stop at eleven to have a cup of tea? I did, it is true, penetrate into what has some relation to the country for skating once or twice. There's a pond below Hawksworth village ever famous for the residence there of Farmer Bell, who used to bring us his own meat in a gig and who had a lunatic as a boarder. He was, moreover, possessor of a hay-loft, which smelt more of hay than all the late springs of all my life since. I did, I mean, with my brother Oswald take the tram to Shipley, and walk down through Saltaire turning up sharply to the left in the Hawksworth Road. But after all you could see Lister's mill-chimney all the way, and the country was all rather like Bradford's back-yard. I felt, I think, that if one played cricket in it, one would have to be careful not to knock the ball into the neighbour's window next door. Nevertheless, it was a glimpse, because something of real importance did happen. I heard two men in bowler-hats and leggings discussing not worsted nor shoddy but the misdoings of a bailiff. Sweeter far to me that talk than any adventure story in the world. The town-child was for a bewildered instant in the real, living, practical, winter country. But all too brief because he was hastily recalled by a snowball in the neck to life as it really is.

So that when two or three years later when enchanting accident, for all the world like Old Luk-'Oie, rubbed my eyes with star-dust, I ran with an awed excitement into the countryman's winter, as many years after

'Into spring
whispering
'O' there ran
my daughter Ann.'

And, I thought, if only I were making a collection of my own winters instead of other people's (and how much more satisfactory from my point of view that would be) I could have brought in Grange-Over-Sands, except perhaps that then I couldn't very well see the leafless trees for 'The Woodlanders.' But I did contrive, aged seventeen, to slip into the winter country one Christmas with Geoffrey Burton. Grange was particularly exciting because it lies across the bay and the Kent river from Arnside—where many of my childhood's summers were spent. To me gazing from the unfrequented Arnside shore it had a most Metropolitan air with an Hydro and Hotel—and the train that roared over the viaduct past it to far and fabulous Barrow. Arnside had only one hotel and that so hidden with clematis that I might be forgiven for ignoring it. But at seventeen I crossed the viaduct and strode without a tremor up the steep path to the hotel, and awoke next morning in the countryman's winter. We set out at 6.30 in the dark for Windermere—august and glancing name. There were no crumbs on the floor and no piled-up tables and chairs. There was a steady breathing of life everywhere. Men were engaged in mysterious but whole-hearted avocations about the fields. There was an activity of great horses coming and going, and a sense of preparation on all hands. It seemed that the country went on even after the summer tourists had withdrawn. I don't know how long we took to reach the Lake or whether in fact we actually walked all the long miles. But I can still see the long and quiet water, reflecting a grey sky with some

of the pearl in it of summer midnight in Sweden. There were no visitors to embarrass or share that quiet communion between water and cloud. The processes of beauty were not assumed, but, like a mediaeval architect's work, were as faithful where the eye could not or did not reach as in full view. The country did after all live in itself and of itself. It was not rolled up in winter like a toy, or dismantled like a pleasure-garden. No wonder then, I thought, that Thomas Hardy's ploughmen and shepherds lived so deeply and slowly. They had this source of strength in their veins, and wherever they went they were renewed in and by it. Even the snow that traced the hills in outline had a grave sustaining function in its structural decency. And behind the quiet I saw the Gilbert White activities in ceaseless unhurried action. Yes, I did see with my own eyes, if by help of Gilbert White and Thomas Hardy, a countryman's winter of my own.

And after that, I thought, I will come naturally to the winter of the traveller—the swallow-winter of the migrant heart. And that's my winter. I'll want to die below a mountain-pass in a hut where all's still, and if I don't I'll slip back there to watch them driving the kine down from the high pastures, and to hear the little sigh of the heights sinking into their sleep. Now as to travel and travellers, there are two ways of understanding them. You may be all explorer and believe that travel is to face the unknown for its own sake—the bright eyes of danger that beckon and promise. Or it may only be an escape from safety as from suspended danger. As though it were the stay-at-homes who set their teeth and take their chance of slow damnation. For only by living dangerously can one die safely. 'Safety last' should be the motto inscribed on all the hoardings of life. So that we should all be travellers, and we'd not choose spring and the soft airs of summer, but make winter-pilgrimages like the great snow-camels 'bouncing hugely.' Naturally the untethered mind turns to Polar exploration, because there is the otto of winter, the place where Charles Kingsley's great figure in *The Water Babies*

evolved new forms of life. But I wondered if that was not too long a voyage—a time-machine trip into the ice-age. The explorer of the Pole, I thought, is the very figure of Wells's traveller, disembarking beyond time in a frozen and forgotten world with no life except a few slow-moving shapes like giant crabs of jelly.

But Polar scenes are not for me. Not even though I once, and more than once, saw Nansen plain. He had brought back something of the quiet Pole in his eyes, and something also of the agony of grinding floes and death by icy hunger. Gentlest of Vikings he had fought nothing—for naught was worth his strife—but frost and danger and evil. When he came to civilization he had about him a space as of ice on which the weapons of malice and envy shattered like tin. When he strove at Geneva for the derelicts of the war, he was invisibly safeguarded from his critics. But for all that he was no traveller of earth. The Pole had marked him for her own as surely as she marked Scott. No, I thought, I dare not travel by Nansen's way and Scott's.

For me, I said, if it's to be my own winter (and who else's is it anyhow) it will be less perilous, more Hakluyt, because that's strange and intimate, and above all Robert Louis Stevenson, for whom I cherish a quite irrevocable affection:

Or let autumn fall on me
  Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird in tree
  Biting the blue finger.
White as meal the frosty field
  Warm the fireside haven—
Not to autumn will I yield,
  Not to winter even.

Ah yes, to wander so, and again:

The untented Kosmos my abode
  I pass, a wilful stranger!
My mistress still the open road
  And the bright eyes of danger.

Come ill or well, the cross, the crown,
The rainbow or the thunder,
I fling my soul and body down
To God to plough them under.

And a good journey, I thought, to Auld Reekie, whither I went to Tessie's party one Christmastime from Oxford.

Do you remember—can you e'er forget?—
How in the coiled perplexities of youth,
In our wild climate, in our scowling town,
We gloomed and shivered, sorrowed, sobbed and feared?
The belching winter wind, the missile rain,
The rare and welcome silence of the snows,
The laggard morn, the haggard day, the night,
The grimy spell of the nocturnal town,
Do you remember?—Ah, could one forget?

No! one could not forget. It was already dark when the train drew into that huge station crouching under Arthur's Seat. The East Wind, as always, blew down Princes Street as though Eurus stood by the corner of Lothian Road with apple cheeks and pursed blowing mouth. But the tram and youth took us easily through the utmost gale. There was a little snow on the ground, for the four-wheel cab that came to fetch us for the ball slithered aimlessly down Haxlington Gardens. What then? Were there not

Winds that in darkness piped a tune
And the high-riding virgin moon.

All that—and to dance and to leave the dance for the return train at midnight with a waltz in my head and no winter at all in my heart. Ah, Robert Louis, the best of all traveller's songs was when you wrote:

Blows the wind to-day, and the sun and rain are flying,
Blows the wind on the moors to-day and now,
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying,
My heart remembers how.

That would be, Stevenson, on the road between Fairmilehead past Hunters' Tryst to Colinton. You passed that way to your cottage-home beneath the Pentlands—the way that St. Ives (and another refugee) passed later to find Swanston and a rescue. The whaups were crying then: they are still crying. And perhaps when a few years later Ann lay in the big wicker chair at 8, Neville Street—a little bundle of white—and gurgled at the candles on her first Christmas tree, she heard their arrowy voices. Certainly she was not listening to any sound that we could hear.

And so naturally to the winter of the soldier and the sailor. It needs no horror of war-books to remind the middle-aged of our generation, I thought, of winter in the trenches—or out of them. There's an account, for example, in Fritz von Unruh's *Opfergang* of the attack on Verdun in the snow. It reads like the story of a swarm of lice smothered in a feather-bed, told by a surviving louse. It has, or if read would have, immense propaganda value. It is the work of a very gallant soldier who was martyred for his convictions by his own caste. And, like Milton's description of the frozen Hell, it has its place in the bitter geography of death. But it hasn't the news-value that we incline to attach to it. I suppose that this habit of freezing men to death wasn't invented with poison-gas. Napoleon—that great discoverer of new methods of mass-assassination—had a certain success in the return from Russia. Nor did we altogether fail in the Crimea—as I once ventured to observe:

> Nor were the statesmen slow in Russian blood
> to seal man's evangelic brotherhood,
> and claim (with truth) that Inkermann had shown
> that men content (in quarrels not their own)
> to starve and perish in a frozen heap
> descended not from monkeys but from sheep.

I wish indeed that I could keep this particular winter out of it altogether—except that, as we are men, nothing inhuman should be treated as alien to us. So that I'd better include the Russian

campaign, and a gale or two, I wouldn't care what the professors said. But it would be awkward to wake on some December night, and hear a wind howling down the chimney in a rage because it had been left out. I don't know (nor does anybody else) what is the right reading of the line describing Hamlet's father. But, as I imagine, it should read:

> smote the sledded Polacks on the ice

then we have Shakespeare's authority for winter-warfare, and that is good enough for me. And in any case as Wilfrid Owen bitterly cried:

> Heart, you are not so hot
> as hearts made great with shot.

We had better remember those hearts even in winter.

Which will permit us to turn with an even keener zest to the winters of the Reveller and the Sportsman. Nothing like 'old unhappy far-off things' or, indeed, new unhappy and immediate things to give an edge to merriment. It's true, of course, that we have lost the taste for gargantuan enjoyment. Our pleasures, like our souls, have been steadily mechanized, and Christmas festivities have changed from a display of possibly fraudulent family happiness to a source of anxious calculation for hotel proprietors and overtime for foreign waiters. Let's conceive as a basis the townsman, struggling out of the mud and the cold to sit down by his fire with his mug of toasted ale, singing a catch or two, while it's snowing outside on the damned people. Very like a Dutch picture it should be—all fowls hanging by the neck and piles of vegetables and a woman with bare arms leaning over a bar and saying, 'What's yours?' I would for my part have liked to have a Court Masque and follow it with a pantomime, because one form of revel is as dead as the other and both are as dead as the Christmas that Dickens very nearly brought to life by writing about it as though it existed. I thought of Kelleher saying 'I'd have a pantomime though, if I'd been let and a Christmas Card

or two. I can't see and never could why we shouldn't have something for the corner-boy and the corner-girl too if it comes to that. All those high-up lengthy pieces are like a man talking Greek with a French accent down the microphone, and half the pubs in the country with loud-speakers. D'you wonder somebody chucks a mug at the damned thing? Why shouldn't you have a Principal Boy—dear Florrie Forde perhaps, tights and all, singing:

Sweet Rosy O'Grady
My dear little Rose,
She's my little lady
As all the world knows.
And when we are married
How happy we'll be.
I love sweet Rosy O'Grady,
And Rosy O'Grady loves me.

But I couldn't put Florrie Forde in, could I, and in any case she would remind not of her prepotent self but rather of Wilmer Road by the reservoir—that long grim road curling up from North Park Road to Heaton. I should have to reproduce myself singing the song, as always out of tune, outside the Younghusbands' house when I was on my way there to practise my interventions on the drum in 'The Unfinished Symphony.' And I conclude that we have had all that we can stand of Bradford winters. But there's another difficulty about pantomimes. They were so quite exceptionally silly. Monsieur Domry—the remarkable French master at Bradford Grammar School—said that no foreigners should ever be permitted to see them. 'It is not a drama, not a farce, not a burlesque, nothing—only the stammer of a rat decaying in a gutter. If that is the English mind, if you cannot change it, you could at least cover it up.' But Mr. Domry was only right in part, because the pantomime was not the theatre at all. It was only the national unbuttoning of the waistcoat after a meal of incomparable indigestibility. It was everybody's post-prandial nap. It supplied the half-witted of all

ages with their annual joke in the form of a meaningless password. 'Where did you get that hat?' for instance gladdened more homes than Shakespeare's Sonnets. There were tunes for all who hated music, and a display of legs for Puritans. There were attacks on all defenceless objects, such as old maids, unpopular politicians, declining faculties and physical defects in general—for the lovers of their kind. And above all there were the great gas-chandeliers, the gilding, the footlights, the smell of oranges, the voices shouting 'Chuglets, any chuglets?', and the great smear of massed faces like an enormous bunch of pink balloons held down by the balloon-woman's string, but liable at any moment to break loose, and bob against the painted goddesses in the roof. Ah yes, the pantomimes at the Theatre Royal in Manningham Lane—the theatre long dead but in its prime advertised as 'The Home of Pantomime'—were an orgy of nonsense but they were all that was left of the Maypole. The Nine Men's Morris now is deep in mud.

I can't have a pantomime therefore, not even the one that began with the scene representing the outside of a public-house. Noise was heard from within, and presently a reveller appeared backwards by way of a broken window. This acrobat picked himself up, brushed off some of the glass adhering to his person, and observed to the hole in the pane, 'You don't say so?' Nor even Eugene Stratton singing 'Pretty Dolly Daydream, pride of Idaho,' nor even more strikingly the full strength of the chorus, singing during our Titanic and single-handed contest with President Kruger:

It's the soldiers of the Queen, my lads
Who've been, my lads,
Who're seen, my lads.
In the fight for England's glory, lads,
When we've had to show them what we mean.
And when we say we've always won,
And when they ask us how it's done,
We'll proudly point to every one
Of England's Soldiers of the Queen.

Not even that, but in compensation I might have Boz at Astley's Circus, and perhaps King John swallowing his salted eel in 1213, and King Henry VIII appearing in Hull in a coat 'the one half of russet, spangled with spangles of fine gold, the other half rich cloth of gold' (which shows that they didn't live in the Middle Age for nothing) and, of course, Robert Herrick. I would have had, too, but I don't see how I can get it, Max Beerbohm's account in *The Christmas Garland* of how Mr. Rudyard Kipling's policeman frog-marched Santa Claus to gaol for burglariously entering houses by way of the chimney; or the discussion over twenty pages and in one sentence as to whether it would be possible to examine or not to examine, or as it were, to contemplate examining the Christmas stocking to the great satisfaction of Henry James; or, above all, Mr. H. G. Wells inviting his reforming hero to devote Christmas Eve at a country house-party to the consideration of the benefits of graduated Euthanasia. But Max after all cancels out Dickens, and in any case if I wrote to Rapallo I should probably never get an answer.

And then there's the 'Sportsman's Winter.' Somebody asked me the other day to write a pamphlet against blood-sports, and Robert Lynd said that I couldn't because I ate turkey. Vegetarianism, like pacificism, is I know only the first step to release, and besides I can't help remembering my vitamines. But even so, I can't help feeling that there's a difference between killing for the sake of a sort of diluted sadism, and killing for food. There is still something questionable in the spectacle of Oscar Wilde's unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable. Little use to argue that hares enjoy being gnawed alive, or that it's good for farmers or the breed of horses, or that huntsmen are kinder to men and animals than Nonconformists. The fact remains that men and women go killing because its fun as a boy swats flies on a window-pane. As Count Caloveglia would say, it isn't pretty, though in using that adjective I am reminded that it has a technical use. Some noble sportsman aroused slight, though

easily rebutted, criticism by mentioning that he had never seen a prettier sight than a hind being hunted out to sea by motor-boats. His explanation that he had used the word in a Pickwickian sense was naturally accepted. But I repeat that even so spirited an action as that doesn't seem 'pretty' to me.

Nevertheless there is 'Merrie Englande' to be considered and the Black Death and the Wars of the Roses and all the other amiable incidents that justify the adjective. We are all of us John Peeles at heart, especially those who recognize hounds only by having seen representations of them on Christmas Cards. Like Barry Pain's lady who always wept when she heard Irish songs, because she came from Kent, we will yodel the appropriate hunting-screams, because our favourite week-end amusement is writing in the garden. So that I had better have a description of a hunt or two, because in any case didn't I—Protestant conscience and all—once attend a meet of the Exmoor fox-hounds? In a dog-cart. Which I drove myself—through the hounds and into a ditch. And wasn't it sleeting so hard that the snow sagged perceptibly under the weight of water? I can't, I mean, keep it up with that behind me, particularly as I went because I thought it the proper thing to do. Thug! and who am I to question the gallant proprieties of 'Reynard the Fox'? Very well, then, as the Principal Boy used to sing cracking what may or may not have been a suitable whip for the purpose, 'A-hunting we will go.' Moreover, it's true that blood-sports at a distance have a comfortable atmosphere of Charles Keene and those red-bound volumes of *Punch* in a long row that have consoled more than one winter evening. They have then a Barchester air, so that you can hear a horn from the quiet of the cathedral cloister. And farther off still they have the quality of mediaeval pictures of the chase, and the look of a tapestry by candle-light. As when Matthew Arnold wrote:

> And in the Arras wrought you see
> A stately huntsman clad in green,

And round him a fresh forest-scene.
On that clear forest knoll he stays
With his pack round him and delays.
He stares and stares with troubled face
At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,
At that bright, iron-figured door,
And those blown rushes on the floor.

The wild boar rustles in his lair;
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air;
But Lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O Hunter! and without a fear
Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,
And through the glades thy pastime take—
For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here!
For those thou seest are unmoved;
Cold, cold as those who lived and loved
A thousand years ago.

Besides there's skating:

'When we poor fenmen skate the ice
and shiver on the wold.'

Certainly there must be 'The Sportsman's Winter.'

All these winters—though described by poets and their kind—belong not to the poet but to those in whose behalf the poet makes. There are two other winters—the winter of his own beauty, and the winter of his prayer—'The Poet's Winter' and 'God and Mary's Winter.' In these regions even for me the difficulty is not of finding but of choice. The strange glacial charm of winter has had the power to lend outline often to the work of the poorest poet: it has touched that of the greater with the loving craftsmanship of Benvenuto Cellini working in ice. Spring with its too easy blandishment has proved fatal to all but the best. The verse of the world is littered with the corpses of rathe primroses that died not because they were forgotten but because they were sentimentally remembered. Not so with

winter. Indeed, as Walter de la Mare once said to me, it's difficult to go wrong with winter—so austere is it, so restrained a mistress. Being such the season has drawn all poets with its grave enchantment, and not least Shakespeare. Indeed one could have made a complete section of 'Shakespeare's Winter' that would not only have been incomparably lovely, but would have been as long as a summer's day. It may be indeed that English poets, because of their climate, have an especial cunning with winter. The East Wind has almost cried its way into their blood, and, though they have rarely experienced great frosts, yet at any moment between November and April they may wake to find that the snow has stolen the world away. Yet it cannot be this reason alone or chiefly that gives winter such prominence in their thought. For the Frenchmen, too, born under easier skies have suffered this sorcery, and have set out their lines in all the bravery of crystal frond and fern upon the window-pane. As witness Theodore-Agrippa D'Aubigné writing in the age of English Elizabeth thus:

Mes volages humeurs, plus sterilles que belles,
S'en vont; et je leur dis; Vous sentez, irondelles,
S'esloigner la chaleur et le froid arriver.
Allez nicher ailleurs, pour ne tascher, impures,
Ma couche de babil et ma table d'ordures;
Laissez dormir en paix la nuict de mon hyver.

D'un seul poinct le soleil n'esloigne l'hemisphère;
Il jette moins d'ardeur, mais autant de lumière.
Je change sans regrets, lorsque je me repens
Des frivoles amours et de leur artifice.
J'ayme l'hyver qui vient purger mon coeur de vice,
Comme de peste l'air, la terre de serpens.

Mon chef blanchit, dessous les neiges entassées.
Le soleil, qui reluit, les eschauffe, glacées,
Mais ne les peut dissoudre, au plus court de ses mois.
Fondez, neiges; venez dessus mon coeur descendre,
Qu'encores il ne puisse allumer de ma cendre
Du brazier, comme il fit des flammes autrefois.

This is very well—a good morality, and better still at a different plane Gérard de Nerval crying for the early nineteenth century:

Au printemps, l'oiseau naît et chante:
N'avez-vous jamais ouï sa voix? . . .
Elle est pure, simple et touchante
La voix de l'oiseau—dans les bois!

L'été, l'oiseau cherche l'oiselle;
Il aime, et n'aime qu'une fois!
Qu'il est doux, paisible et fidèle
Le nid de l'oiseau—dans les bois!

Puis, quand vient l'automne brumeuse
Il se tait . . . avant les temps froids.
Hélas! qu'elle doit être heureuse
La mort de l'oiseau—dans les bois!

And so to Mr. Philippe Soupault who rounds up this attitude to winter thus:

Monsieur Miroir
Marchand d'habits
Est mort
Hier soir
A Paris.
Il fait nuit
Il fait noir
Il fait nuit noire
A Paris.

And for that reason, I decided, that though I would visa the passports of no foreigners, not even Heine, who is no foreigner to me, I must let the French in. For how can I leave out, I said, Hugo's description of the retreat from Russia, or de Musset's ghostly companion in *La Nuit de Decembre* or the death of Hialmar in the red snow or Gautier's Carol, or Verlaine's *Sentimental Colloquy* in the frozen park. And I shall have great difficulty, I said, first in not trying to translate the lot (from which God defend any

readers who have read as far as this), and secondly in not ending the whole volume with de Banville and

> Nous n'irons plus au bois, les lauriers sont coupés.
> Les Amours des bassins, les Naïades en groupe
> Voient reluire au soleil en cristeaux découpés
> Les flots silencieux qui coulaient de leur coupe.
> Les lauriers sont coupés, et le cerf aux abois
> Tressaille au son du cor; nous n'irons plus au bois,
> Ou des enfants charmants riait la folle troupe
> Sous les regards des lys aux pleurs du ciel trempés.
> Voici l'herbe qu'on fauche et les lauriers qu'on coupe.
> Nous n'irons plus au bois, les lauriers sont coupés.

I'd use it, I think, if I can't (and perhaps they won't let me) end with:

> Out to seas
> West of these
> Colder than the Hebrides
> I must go,
> Where the fleet of stars is anchored,
> And the young star-captains glow.

Yes, I'll have the Frenchmen and it will make the selection more indefensible than ever—and more mine. And anyhow, if the thing's a miscellany, it ought, oughtn't it, to be miscellaneous?

And so to the winter of the Star. There's not a carol that hasn't been reprinted a hundred times, I reflected, while *The Ode on the Nativity* is as common as the daffodil. Nevertheless, I'll print them all over again as du Maurier printed *Suzon ma fleur des bois* for the sole pleasure of writing it out. I'll undertake not to ask anybody to read a word in this last section which I haven't copied out laboriously in my own hand—and King George couldn't say fairer than that. What's more, there's one particular carol, apparently a modern one, which appears in Kelleher's book, and I propose to write that one down here at once. It would look rather a guttersnipe in his father's old clothes if it were printed among the real grown-up citizens of heaven, who keep the

alabaster pavement. So, if you will, please listen to this song rather tunelessly sung by four waits, who expect at any moment to be shooed away:

The Christ Child said to His Mother,
'What are the gifts for Me,
Since I would have, like other
Children, a Christmas tree?
I am not tall as My father,
But a little Jewish boy.
You offer the world; I had rather
Be given a children's toy.'

The Christ Child said to Mary,
'What candles for My tree?
A silver star, or a ferry—
Man's lamp from Galilee?
For the star God lights the way with
For the kings, though greatly lit,
Is far too high to play with,
And I do not wish for it.'

Mary said to her Baby,
'Sweetheart! for You and me
Different must the play be,
And a different Christmas tree.
The star You cannot play with,
Before the world was lit,
And the great angels pray with
The light that falls from it.'

'But the tree,' said weeping Mary,
'Is a black and leafless tree,
And not the lamp, but the ferry—
Man's self from Galilee
Is hanging there high and lonely,
And though despised and left
Of all, He is the only
Eternal Christmas Gift.'

I began sitting in the snow on a tree stump in the first wood on the left above St. Cergue. I have travelled some little distance

since then and now I am back again at the same place. All is unchanged. The pines wait

'in the long Sunday that goes on and on.'

Nothing, except the wind, moves over the deep snow, trackless now, for the skiers have not yet travelled this way. The brief afternoon sun is setting behind the Jura, and suddenly the great cold of night will return. Well then, here are a few flowers out of *The Winter's Tale*

For you there's rosemary and rue: these keep
Seeming and savour all the winter long.

I had better pass out of the picture and leave you to them. But as I go, having thus poured my libation to winter, I shall hear the voice of the resurrection into spring, after that crucifixion in beauty, thus:

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is;
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy. O wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

HUMBERT WOLFE

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

WINTER

I have supposed that when time shall be weary
of turning the orb of earth in his strong fist,
he will lay it aside with his crown and sceptre,
and there will be no dawn in the East, nor a twilit West.

He will drop his chin pensively on his crooked elbow,
and the days will eddy about him like dead leaves,
but he will not heed their rustle or anything,
when there is not noontide nor green-fading eves.

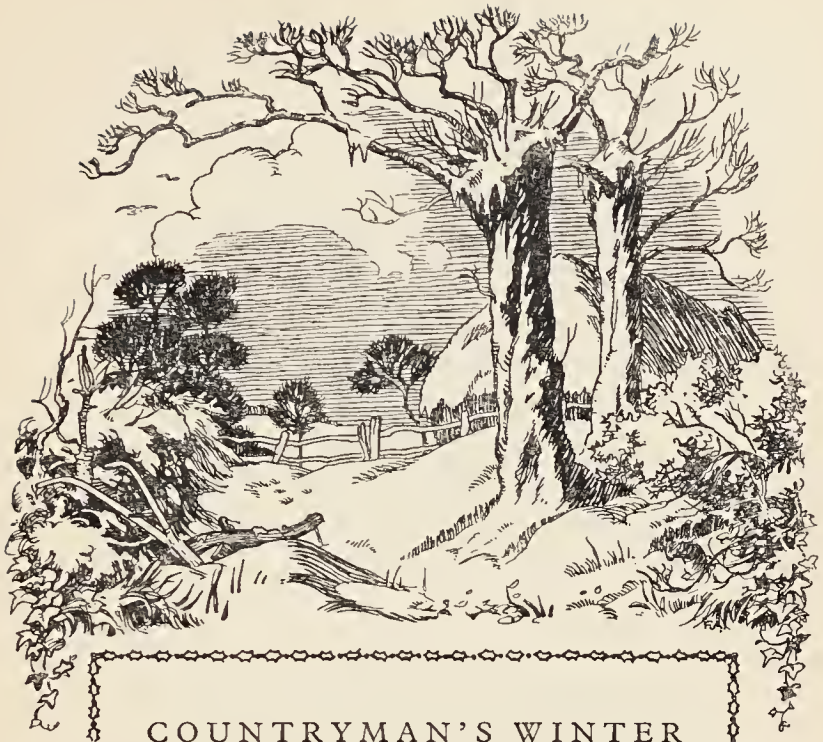
He will be thinking of the desire of godhead,
and, though himself immortal, he will only know
that it is motionless and is as silent
as a falling snowflake on the untrodden snow.

And he will understand that the spring and summer
and the ripening sheaves are neither willed nor planned,
but were only the heat between his fingers
as he turned the orb abandoned in his great hand.

And slowly the frost will trace its patterns,
and bind him like Merlin with the creeping frond
of fretted ice, and the waving hands of snowflakes,
but he will look steadily to a light beyond

the dark light of the glacier, and the half-light
of snow drifting and heaping when there is no sun,
and he will know that there is fulfilment
when the orb in his hand is no longer spun.

Time and his world will be part of winter—
like the cold and glacial moon, as fair, as still—
and there will be no sound even of sighing
when God in Time unthroned accomplishes His will.



COUNTRYMAN'S WINTER

COUNTRYMAN'S WINTER

I

Before the snow was trodden in Shipley Glen
I have plunged deep between the tattered trees
as proud and lonely as great Nansen when
he passed the ice-cliffs of the Polar Seas.
Like him I saw beyond the haunts of men
Nature untroubled breathing at her ease,
and watched the snowflakes dip and rise again
brushing upon my lips like silver bees.
And at Dick Hudson's under Rombald's Moor
farm-labourers like ploughmen in a book
gathered and drank their beer. I am not sure
if there were settles or an ingle nook,
but this I know, they did not speak at all,
and stared indifferently at the wall.

II

Well! that was country winter. Nothing odd
to those who live with trees all year and know
what time the leaves will crumple, when the mud
will smear the lanes, and what winds threaten snow,
but to a boy, who wearily has trod
streets, where dull houses stretch in endless row,
strange as the music of the woodland god
heard in soft lands where oleanders grow.
The idle boors speechlessly drank their ale,
clattered their mugs, and dumbly separated,
but I who read their movements like a tale
by Thomas Hardy, in charmed silence waited.
Then with a happy sigh, but head bent down,
trudged back through moonlit snow to Bradford town.

COUNTRYMAN'S WINTER

		PAGE
PROPERTIES OF WINDS IN WINTER	*Thomas Tusser* 1524–1580	47
God is the Governor of Winds and Weather		47
Though Winds do Rage		47
SUCH THINGS AS ARE GREEN ALL WINTER	*Bacon* 1561–1626	48
TREES IN WINTER. *A New Orchard and Garden*	*Lawson*	48
Grafting. *A New Orchard and Garden*	1618	49
GILBERT WHITE'S WINTER		49
The Great Frost	*Gilbert White*	49
Electricity of Cat	1720-1793	52
Habits of Chaffinches		54
The use of Rushes instead of Candles		56
THE OLD CLOAK	*Anon*	58
THE INVITATION FROM A COUNTRY COTTAGE	*Martha Sanson* 1690–1736	60
THE FIRE SIDE	*Isaac Hawkins Browne M.P.*, 1705–1760	61
STORM IS SIGNALLED	*Thomson* 1700–1748	63
PLEASURES OF MELANCHOLY	*T. Warton* 1728–1790	64
THE WINTER WALK AT NOON	*William Cowper*	65
WINTER IN OLNEY	1731–1800	66
Pictures in the fire		66
A WINTER SEASCAPE	*George Crabbe* 1754–1832	67
COLD BLAWS THE WIND	*John Hamilton*	68
JOHN HAMILTON ADAPTED	*Robert Burns* 1759–1796	69
THE HOLLY TREE	*Robert Southey* 1774–1843	69
JOHN CLARE'S WINTER		71
Snow Storm	*John Clare*	71
Winter Walk	1793–1864	72
Emmonsail's Heath		72
November		73

		PAGE
WORDSWORTH'S WINTER		73
The Proud Swiss	*William Wordsworth*	73
Robin Goodfellow	1770–1850	74
The Shepherd		75
The Solitary		76
DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S WINTER		79
December 12th–December 25th, 1801		79
December 24th, 1802		83
UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY	*Robert Browning* 1812–1889	83
JANUARY IN SUSSEX WOODS	*R. Jefferies* 1848–1887	85
TREES	*John Ruskin* 1819–1900	86

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTIES OF WINDS IN WINTER

North winds send hail, South winds bring rain,
East winds we bewail, West winds blow amain:
North-east is too cold, South-east not too warm,
North-West is too bold, South-west doth no harm.

THOMAS TUSSER, 1524–1580.

GOD IS THE GOVERNOR OF WINDS AND WEATHER

With temperate wind, we be blessed of God,
With tempest we find, we are beat with His rod:
All power, we know, to remain in his hand,
However wind blow, by sea or by land.

Idem

THOUGH WINDS DO RAGE

Though winds do rage, as winds were wood,
And cause spring tides to raise great flood,
And lofty ships leave anchor in mud
Bereaving many of life, and of blood;
Yet true it is as cow chews cud,
And trees, at spring, do yield forth bud,
Except wind stands, as never wind stood,
It is an ill wind turns none to good.

Idem

SUCH THINGS AS ARE GREEN ALL WINTER

I DO hold it, in the royal ordering of gardens, there ought to be gardens for all the months in the year; in which, severally, things of beauty may be then in season. For December and January and the latter part of November, you must take such things as are green all winter; holly; ivy; bays; juniper; cypress trees; yew; pine-apple-trees; fir-trees; rosemary; lavender; periwinkle, the white, the purple, and the blue; germander; flags; orange-trees; lemon-trees, and myrtles, if they be stoved; and sweet marjoram, warm set. There followeth, for the latter part of January and February, the Mezereon tree, which then blossoms; crocus vernus, both the yellow and the gray; primroses; anemones; the early tulipps; hyacinthus orientalis; chamairis; fritillaria.

Of Gardens
BACON, 1561–1626.

TREES IN WINTER

FOR as in the body of man, the leaning or lying on some member, whereby the course of the blood is stopt, makes that member as it were dead for the time, till the blood return to his course, and I think, if that stopping should continue any time, the member will perish for want of blood, (for the life is in the blood) and so indanger the body; so the sap is the life of the Tree, as the blood is to man's Body: neither doth the Tree in Winter (as is supposed) want his sap, no more than man's Body his blood, which in Winter, and time of sleep, draws inward: so that the dead time of Winter, to a Tree, is but a night of rest: for the Tree at all times, even in Winter, is nourish'd with sap and growth as well as man's body. The chilling cold may well some little time stay or hinder the proud course of the sap, but so little and so short a time, that in calm and mild seasons, even in the depth of Winter, if you mark it, you may easily perceive the sap to put out, and your Trees to increase their buds which were formed in the Summer before, and may easily be discerned; for leaves fall not off, till they be thrust off with the knots or buds whereupon it comes to pass, that Trees cannot bear fruit plentifully two years together, and make themselves ready to blossom against the seasonableness of the next Spring.

And if any Frost be so extream, that it stay the sap too much, or too long, then it kills the forward fruit in the bud, and sometimes the tender leaves and twigs, but not the Tree: Wherefore to return, it is perillous to stop the sap.

A New Orchard and Garden
LAWSON, 1618

GRAFTING

Now when you have made choice of your Sets to remove, the ground being ready, the best time is, immediately after the fall of the Leaf, in or about the change of the Moon, when the sap is most quiet, for then the sap is turning; for it makes no stay, but in the extremity of drought or cold: At any time in winter, you may Transplant Trees, so you put no ice nor snow to the Root of your Plant in the setting: and therefore open, calm, and moist weather is best. To remove, the Leaf being ready to fall, and not fallen, or buds apparently put forth in a moist warm season, for need, sometime may do well; but the safest is to walk in the plain trodden path.

Idem

GILBERT WHITE'S WINTER

THE GREAT FROST

THERE were some circumstances attending the remarkable frost in January 1776, so singular and striking, that a short detail of them may not be unacceptable.

The most certain way to be exact will be to copy the passages from my journal, which were taken from time to time, as things occurred. But it may be proper previously to remark that the first week in January was uncommonly wet, and drowned with vast rains from every quarter: from whence may be inferred, as there is great reason to believe is the case, that intense frosts seldom take place till the earth is perfectly glutted and chilled with water; and hence dry autumns are seldom followed by rigorous winters.

January 7th.—Snow driving all the day, which was followed by frost, sleet, and some snow, till the 12th, when a prodigious

mass overwhelmed all the works of men, drifting over the tops of the gates and filling the hollow lanes.

On the 14th the writer was obliged to be much abroad; and thinks he never before or since has encountered such rugged Siberian weather. Many of the narrow roads were now filled above the tops of the hedges; through which the snow was driven into most romantic and grotesque shapes, so striking to the imagination as not to be seen without wonder and pleasure. The poultry dared not to stir out of their roosting-places; for cocks and hens are so dazzled and confounded by the glare of snow that they would soon perish without assistance. The hares also lay sullenly in their seats, and would not move till compelled by hunger; being conscious—poor animals—that the drifts and heaps treacherously betray their footsteps, and prove fatal to numbers of them.

From the 14th the snow continued to increase, and began to stop the road wagons, and coaches,which could no longer keep on their regular stages; and especially on the western roads, where the fall appears to have been deeper than in the south. The company at Bath, that wanted to attend the Queen's birth-day, were strangely incommoded: many carriages of persons, who got in their way to town from Bath as far as Marlborough, after strange embarrassments, here met with a *ne plus ultra*. The ladies fretted, and offered large rewards to labourers if they would shovel them a track to London; but the relentless heaps of snow were too bulky to be removed; and so the 18th passed over, leaving the company in very uncomfortable circumstances at the Castle and other inns.

On the 20th the sun shone out for the first time since the frost began; a circumstance that has been remarked before much in favour of vegetation. All this time the cold was not very intense, for the thermometer stood at 29°, 28°, 25°, and thereabout; but on the 21st it descended to 20°. The birds now began to be in a very pitiable and starving condition. Tamed by the season, sky-larks settled in the streets of towns, because they saw the ground was bare; rooks frequented dunghills close to houses; and crows watched horses as they passed, and greedily devoured what dropped from them; hares now came into men's gardens, and, scraping away the snow, devoured such plants as they could find.

On the 22nd the author had occasion to go to London through a sort of Laplandian scene, very wild and grotesque indeed. But

the metropolis itself exhibited a still more singular appearance than the country; for, being bedded deep in snow, the pavement of the streets could not be touched by the wheels or the horses' feet, so that the carriages ran about without the least noise. Such an exemption from din and clatter was strange, but not pleasant; it seemed to convey an uncomfortable idea of desolation:—

'——Ipsa silentia terrent.'

On the 27th much snow fell all day, and in the evening the frost became very intense. At South Lambeth, for the four following nights, the thermometer fell to 11°, 7°, 6°, 6°; and at Selborne to 7°, 6°, 10°; and on the 31st of January, just before sunrise, with rime on the trees and on the tube of the glass, the quicksilver sunk exactly to zero, being 32° below the freezing point; but by eleven in the morning, though in the shade, it sprang up to 16½°,— a most unusual degree of cold this for the south of England! During these four nights the cold was so penetrating that it occasioned ice in warm chambers and under beds; and in the day the wind was so keen that persons of robust constitutions could scarcely endure to face it. The Thames was at once so frozen over both above and below bridge that crowds ran about on the ice. The streets were now strangely encumbered with snow, which crumbled and trod dusty; and, turning grey, resembled bay-salt; what had fallen on the roofs was so perfectly dry that, from first to last, it lay twenty-six days on the houses in the city: a longer time than had been remembered by the oldest housekeepers living. According to all appearances we might now have expected the continuance of this rigorous weather for weeks to come, since every night increased in severity; but behold, without any apparent cause, on the 1st of February a thaw took place, and some rain followed before night, making good the observation above, that frosts often go off as it were at once, without any gradual declension of cold. On the 2nd of February the thaw persisted; and on the 3rd swarms of little insects were frisking and sporting in a court-yard at South Lambeth, as if they had felt no frost. Why the juices in the small bodies and smaller limbs of such minute beings are not frozen is a matter of curious inquiry.

As to the birds, the thrushes and blackbirds were mostly destroyed; and the partridges, by the weather and poachers, were so thinned that few remained to breed the following year.

ELECTRICITY OF CAT

As the frost in December 1784 was very extraordinary, you, I trust, will not be displeased to hear the particulars; and especially when I promise to say no more about the severities of winter after I have finished this letter.

The first week in December was very wet, with the barometer very low. On the 7th, with the barometer at 28.5°—came on a vast snow, which continued all that day and the next, and most part of the following night; so that by the morning of the 9th the works of men were quite overwhelmed, the lanes filled so as to be impassable, and the ground covered twelve or fifteen inches without any drifting. In the evening of the 9th the air began to be so very sharp that we thought it would be curious to attend to the motions of a thermometer; we therefore hung out two, one made by Martin and one by Dollond, which soon began to show us what we were to expect; for by ten o'clock, they fell to 21°, and at eleven to 4°, when we went to bed. On the 10th, in the morning the quicksilver of Dollond's glass was down to half a degree below zero; and that of Martin's, which was absurdly graduated only to four degrees above zero, sunk quite into the brass guard of the ball; so that when the weather became most interesting this was useless. On the 10th, at eleven at night, though the air was perfectly still, Dollond's glass went down to one degree below zero! This strange severity of the weather made me very desirous to know what degree of cold there might be in such an exalted and near situation as Newton. We had therefore, on the morning of the 10th, written to Mr. ——, and intreated him to hang out his thermometer, made by Adams, and to pay some attention to it morning and evening, expecting wonderful phenomena, in so elevated a region, at two hundred feet or more above my house. But, behold! on the 10th, at eleven at night, it was down only to 17°, and the next morning at 22°, when mine was at 10°! We were so disturbed at this unexpected reverse of comparative local cold, that we sent one of my glasses up, thinking that of Mr. —— must somehow be wrongly constructed. But, when the instruments came to be confronted, they went exactly together; so that, for one night at least, the cold at Newton was 18° less than at Selborne; and, through the whole frost, 10° or 12°; and indeed, when we came to observe consequences, we could readily credit this;

for all my laurustines, bays, ilexes, arbutuses, cypresses, and even my Portugal laurels, and (which occasions more regret) my fine sloping laurel-hedge, were scorched up; while, at Newton, the same trees have not lost a leaf!

We had steady frost on to the 25th, when the thermometer in the morning was down to 10° with us, and at Newton only to 21°. Strong frost continued till the 31st, when some tendency to thaw was observed; and, by January the 3rd, 1785, the thaw was confirmed, and some rain fell.

A circumstance that I must not omit, because it was new to us, is, that on Friday, December the 10th, being bright sunshine, the air was full of icy *spiculæ*, floating in all directions, like atoms in a sunbeam let into a dark room. We thought them at first particles of the rime falling from my tall hedges; but were soon convinced to the contrary, by making our observations in open places where no rime could reach us. Were they watery particles of the air frozen as they floated, or were they evaporations from the snow frozen as they mounted!

We were much obliged to the thermometers for the early information they gave us; and hurried our apples, pears, onions, potatoes, &c., into the cellar, and warm closets; while those who had not, or neglected such warnings, lost all their store of roots and fruits, and had their very bread and cheese frozen.

I must not omit to tell you that, during these two Siberian days, my parlour cat was so electric, that had a person stroked her, and been properly insulated, the shock might have been given to a whole circle of people.

I forgot to mention before, that, during the two severe days, two men, who were tracing hares in the snow, had their feet frozen; and two men, who were much better employed, had their fingers so affected by the frost, while they were thrashing in a barn, that a mortification followed, from which they did not recover for many weeks.

This frost killed all the furze and most of the ivy, and in many places stripped the hollies of all their leaves. It came at a very early time of the year, before old November ended; and yet may be allowed from its effects to have exceeded any since 1730-40.

Idem

HABITS OF CHAFFINCHES

SELBORNE, 22ND JANUARY, 1768

For many years past I have observed that towards Christmas vast flocks of chaffinches have appeared in the fields; many more, I used to think, than could be hatched in any one neighbourhood. But, when I came to observe them more narrowly, I was amazed to find that they seemed to me to be almost all hens. I communicated my suspicions to some intelligent neighbours, who, after taking pains about the matter, declared that they also thought them all mostly females,—at least fifty to one. This extraordinary occurrence brought to my mind the remark of Linnæus; that 'before winter all their hen chaffinches migrate through Holland into Italy.' Now I want to know, from some curious person in the north, whether there are any large flocks of these finches with them in the winter, and of which sex they mostly consist? For, from such intelligence, one might be able to judge whether our female flocks migrate from the other end of the island, or whether they come over to us from the continent.

We have, in the winter, vast flocks of the common linnets: more, I think, than can be bred in any one district. These, I observe, when the spring advances, assemble on some tree in the sunshine, and join all in a gentle sort of chirping, as if they were about to break up their winter quarters and betake themselves to their proper summer homes. It is well known, at least, that the swallows and the fieldfares do congregate with a gentle twittering before they make their respective departure.

You may depend on it that the bunting, *Emberiza miliaria*, does not leave this country in the winter. In January, 1767, I saw several dozen of them, in the midst of a severe frost, among the bushes on the downs near Andover: in our woodland enclosed district it is a rare bird.

Wagtails, both white and yellow, are with us all the winter. Quails crowd to our southern coast, and are often killed in numbers by people that go on purpose.

Mr. Stillingfleet, in his Tracts, says that 'if the wheatear (*œnanthe*) does not quit England, it certainly shifts places; for about harvest they are not to be found, where there was before great plenty of them.' This well accounts for the vast quantities that are caught about that time on the south downs near Lewes,

where they are esteemed a delicacy. There have been shepherds, I have been credibly informed, that have made many pounds in a season by catching them in traps. And though such multitudes are taken, I never saw (and I am well acquainted with those parts) above two or three at a time, for they are never gregarious. They may perhaps migrate in general; and, for that purpose, draw towards the coast of Sussex in autumn: but that they do not all withdraw I am sure; because I see a few stragglers in many counties at all times of the year, especially about warrens and stone quarries.

I have no acquaintance, at present, among the gentlemen of the navy; but have written to a friend, who was a sea-chaplain in the late war, desiring him to look into his minutes, with respect to birds that settled on their rigging during their voyage up or down the channel. What Hasselquist says on that subject is remarkable; there were little short-winged birds frequently coming on board his ship all the way from our channel quite up to the Levant, especially before squally weather.

What you suggest, with regard to Spain, is highly probable. The winters of Andalusia are so mild, that, in all likelihood, the soft-billed birds that leave us at that season may find insects sufficient to support them there.

Some young man, possessed of fortune, health and leisure, should make an autumnal voyage into that kingdom; and should spend a year there, investigating the natural history of that vast country. Mr. Willughby passed through that kingdom on such an errand; but he seems to have skirted along in a superficial manner and an ill-humour, being much disgusted at the rude dissolute manners of the people.

I have no friend left now at Sunbury to apply to about the swallows roosting on the aits of the Thames: nor can I hear any more about those birds which I suspected were *Merulæ torquatæ*.

As to the small mice, I have farther to remark, that though they hang their nests for breeding up amidst the straws of the standing corn, above the ground; yet I find that, in the winter, they burrow deep in the earth, and make warm beds of grass: but their grand rendezvous seems to be in corn-ricks, into which they are carried at harvest. A neighbour housed an oat-rick lately, under the thatch of which were assembled near an hundred, most of which were taken, and some I saw. I measured them; and found that, from nose to tail, they were just two inches and a

quarter, and their tails just two inches long. Two of them, in a scale, weighed down just one copper halfpenny, which is about the third of an ounce avoirdupois: so that I suppose they are the smallest quadrupeds in this island. A full-grown *Mus medius domesticus* weighs, I find, one ounce lumping weight, which is more than six times as much as the mouse above; and measures from nose to rump four inches and a quarter, and the same in its tail.

Idem

ON THE USE OF RUSHES INSTEAD OF CANDLES

SELBORNE, 1ST NOVEMBER, 1765

'Hîc . . . tædæ pingues, hîc plurimus ignis
Semper, et assiduâ postes fuligine nigri.'

I SHALL make no apology for troubling you with the detail of a very simple piece of domestic economy, being satisfied that you think nothing beneath your attention that tends to utility; the matter alluded to is the use of rushes instead of candles, which I am well aware prevails in many districts besides this; but as I know there are countries also where it does not obtain, and as I have considered the subject with some degree of exactness, I shall proceed in my humble story, and leave you to judge of the expediency.

The proper species of rush for this purpose seems to be the *juncus effusus*, or common soft rush, which is to be found in most moist pastures, by the sides of streams, and under hedges. These rushes are in best condition in the height of summer; but may be gathered, so as to serve the purpose well, quite on to autumn. It would be needless to add that the largest and longest are best. Decayed labourers, women, and children, make it their business to procure and prepare them. As soon as they are cut, they must be flung into water, and kept there, for otherwise they will dry and shrink, and the peel will not run. At first a person would find it no easy matter to divest a rush of its peel or rind, so as to leave one regular, narrow, even rib from top to bottom that may support the pith; but this like other feats, soon becomes familiar even to children; and we have seen an old woman, stone blind, performing this business with great dispatch, and seldom failing to strip them with the nicest regularity. When these *junci* are thus

far prepared, they must lie out on the grass to be bleached, and take the dew for some nights, and afterwards be dried in the sun.

Some address is required in dipping these rushes in the scalding fat or grease; but this knack also is to be attained by practice. The careful wife of an industrious Hampshire labourer obtains all her fat for nothing; for she saves the scummings of her bacon-pot for this use; and, if the grease abounds with salt, she causes the salt to precipitate to the bottom, by setting the scummings in a warm oven. Where hogs are not much in use, and especially by the sea-side, the coarser animal-oils will come very cheap. A pound of common grease may be procured for fourpence, and about six pounds of grease will dip a pound of rushes, and one pound of rushes may be bought for one shilling; so that a pound of rushes, medicated and ready for use, will cost three shillings. If men that keep bees will mix a little wax with the grease, it will give it a consistency, and render it more cleanly, and make the rushes burn longer; mutton-suet would have the same effect.

A good rush, which measured in length two feet four inches and a half, being minuted, burnt only three minutes short of an hour; and a rush still of greater length has been known to burn one hour and a quarter.

These rushes give a good clear light. Watch-lights (coated with tallow), it is true, shed a dismal one, 'darkness visible'; but then the wick of those have two ribs of the rind, or peel, to support the pith, while the wick of the dipped rush has but one. The two ribs are intended to impede the progress of the flame and make the candle last.

In a pound of dry rushes, avoirdupois, which I caused to be weighed and numbered, we found upwards of one thousand six hundred individuals. Now suppose each of these burns, one with another, only half an hour, then a poor man will purchase eight hundred hours of light, a time exceeding thirty-three entire days, for three shillings. According to this account each rush, before dipping, costs $\frac{1}{33}$ of a farthing, and $\frac{1}{11}$ afterwards. Thus a poor family will enjoy five and a half hours of comfortable light for a farthing. An experienced old housekeeper assures me that one pound and a half of rushes completely supplies his family the year round, since working people burn no candles in the long days, because they rise and go to bed by daylight.

Little farmers use rushes much in the short days both morning

and evening, in the dairy and kitchen; but the very poor, who are always the worst economists, and therefore must continue very poor, buy a halfpenny candle every evening, which in their blowing open rooms, does not burn much more than two hours. Thus have they only two hours light for their money instead of eleven.

While on the subject of rural economy, it may not be improper to mention a pretty implement of housewifery that we have seen nowhere else; that is, little neat besoms which our foresters make from the stalks of the *polytricum commune*, or great golden maiden hair, which they call silk-wood, and find plenty in the bogs. When this moss is well combed and dressed, and divested of its outer skin, it becomes of a beautiful bright-chestnut colour; and, being soft and pliant, is very proper for the dusting of beds, curtains, carpets, hangings, &c. If these besoms were known to the brush-makers in town, it is probable they might come much in use for the purpose above-mentioned.

Idem

THE OLD CLOAK

THIS winter's weather it waxeth cold,
And frost it freezeth on every hill,
And Boreas blows his blast so bold
That all our cattle are like to spill.
Bell, my wife, she loves no strife;
She said unto me quietlye,
Rise up, and save cow Crumbock's life!
Man, put thine old cloak about thee!

He. O Bell, my wife, why dost thou flyte?[1]
Thou kens my cloak is very thin:
It is so bare and over worn,
A crickè thereon cannot renn.
Then I'll no longer borrow nor lend;
For once I'll new apparell'd be;
To-morrow I'll to town and spend;
For I'll have a new cloak about me.

[1]Scold.

She. Cow Crumbock is a very good cow:
She has been always true to the pail;
She has helped us to butter and cheese, I trow,
And other things she will not fail.
I would be loth to see her pine.
Good husband, counsel take of me:
It is not for us to go so fine—
Man, take thine old cloak about thee!

He. My cloak it was a very good cloak,
It hath been always true to the wear;
But now it is not worth a groat:
I have had it four and forty year'.
Sometime it was of cloth in grain:[1]
'Tis now but a sigh clout,[2] as you may see:
It will neither hold out wind nor rain;
And I'll have a new cloak about me.

She. It is four and forty years ago
Sine the one of us the other did ken;
And we have had, betwixt us two,
Of children either nine or ten.
We have brought them up to women and men:
In the fear of God I trow they be.
And why wilt thou thyself misken?
Man, take thine old cloak about thee!

He. O Bell, my wife, why dost thou flyte?
Now is now, and then was then:
Seek now all the world throughout,
Thou kens not clowns from gentlemen:
They are clad in black, green, yellow and blue,
So far above their own degree.
Once in my life I'll take a view;
For I'll have a new cloak about me.

She. King Stephen was a worthy peer;
His breeches cost him but a crown;
He held them sixpence all too dear,
Therefore he called the tailor 'lown.'

[1]Scarlet cloth. [2]A rag for straining.

He was a king and wore the crown,
And thou'se but of a low degree:
It's pride that puts this country down:
Man, take thy old cloak about thee!

He. Bell, my wife, she loves not strife,
Yet she will lead me, if she can;
And to maintain an easy life
I oft must yield, though I'm good-man.
It's not for a man with a woman to threap,
Unless he first give o'er the plea:
As we began, so we will keep,
And I'll take my old cloak about me.

Sixteenth Century (?)

ANONYMOUS

THE INVITATION FROM A COUNTRY COTTAGE

CLOSE to the fireside confin'd,
By the cold fogs, and piercing wind,
Bless'd with my dog, and peace of mind,
The cheerful rustics all sit round,
Whose careful hands improve the ground,
After the labour of the day,
Upon the clean-swept hearth, and play;
The well-us'd pack of cards was found,
Grown soil'd with often dealing round;
No ceremony, here, they use,
But frankly wrangle, when they lose;
The hand that deals to all the rest,
Returns not back to Colin's breast,
As among finer gamesters seen,
Nor is the table lin'd with green,
But a plain, honest, cleanly board,
Such as these humble shades afford;
No gold upon the table shines,
But chalk the homely game confines;
Some lad, more am'rous than the rest,
Sings a sad ditty to their guest,

Of some false damsel, most ingrate,
Or melancholy *Bateman's* fate.
Believe, it pleases me, my friend,
To see the artless tears descend;
Their eyes, that ne'er were *taught* to grieve,
Their hearts, which nat'ral passions heave,
Show lovely nature all undress'd,
And charm my undesigning breast;
O! come, my friend, and see *one* place,
Where all things wear an honest face.

Clio

MARTHA SANSON (*née* FOWKE), 1690–1736

THE FIRE SIDE

A PASTORAL SOLILOQUY

Hic secretum iter et fallentis semita vitæ.—*Horace*

THRICE happy, who free from ambition and pride,
In a rural retreat, has a quiet fire side;
I love my fire side, there I long to repair,
And to drink a delightful oblivion of care.
Oh! when shall I 'scape to be truly my own,
From the noise, and the smoke, and the bustle of town.
Then I live, then I triumph, whene'er I retire
From the pomp and parade that the Many admire.
Hail ye woods and ye lawns, shady vales, sunny hills,
And the warble of birds, and the murmur of rills,
Ye flowers of all hues that embroider the ground,
Flocks feeding, or frisking in gambols around;
Scene of joy to behold! joy, that who would forego,
For the wealth and the power that a Court can bestow?
I have said it at home, I have said it abroad,
That the town is man's world, but that this is of God;
Here my trees cannot flatter, plants nurs'd by my care
Pay with fruit or with fragrance, and incense the air;
Here contemplative solitude raises the mind,
(Least alone, when alone,) to ideas refin'd.
Methinks hid in groves, that no sound can invade,
Save when Philomel strikes up her sweet serenade,

I revolve on the changes and chances of things,
And pity the wretch that depends upon kings.

Now I pass with old authors an indolent hour,
And reclining at ease turn Demosthenes o'er.
Now facetious and vacant, I urge the gay flask
With a set of old friends—who have nothing to ask;
Thus happy, I reck not of France nor of Spain,
Nor the *balance of power* what hand shall sustain.
The *balance of power?* Ah! till that is restor'd,
What solid delight can retirement afford?
Some must be content to be drudges of state,
That the sage may securely enjoy his retreat.
In weather serene, when the ocean is calm,
It matters not much who presides at the helm;
But as soon as clouds gather and tempests arise,
Then a pilot there needs, a man dauntless and wise.
If such can be found, sure he ought to come forth
And lend to the public his talents and worth.
Whate'er inclination or ease may suggest,
If the state wants his aid, he has no claim to rest;
But who is the Man, a bad game to redeem?
He whom Turin admires, who has Prussia's esteem,
Whom the Spaniard has felt; and whose iron with dread
Haughty Lewis saw forging to fall on his head.
Holland loves him, nor less in the North all the powers
Court, honour, revere, and the Empress adores.
Hark! what was that sound? for it seem'd more sublime
Than befits the low genius of pastoral rhyme;
Was it Wisdom I heard, or can fumes of the brain
Cheat my ears with a dream? Ha! repeat me that strain:
Yes, Wisdom, I hear thee; Thou deign'st to declare
Me, Me, the sole Atlas to prop this whole sphere:
Thy voice says, or seems in sweet accents to say,
'Haste to save sinking Britain';—resign'd I obey;
And O! witness ye Powers, that ambition and pride
Have no share in this change—*for I love my fire side.*
Thus the Shepherd; then throwing his crook away steals
Direct to St. James's and takes up the Seals.

ISAAC HAWKINS BROWNE, M.P.
1705–1760

STORM IS SIGNALLED

RETIRING from the downs, where all day long
They picked their scanty fare, a blackening train
Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight,
And seek the closing shelter of the grove.
Assiduous, in his bower, the wailing owl
Plies his sad song. The cormorant on high
Wheels from the deep, and screams along the land.
Loud shrieks the soaring heron; and with wild wing
The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky clouds.
Ocean, unequal pressed, with broken tide
And blind commotion heaves; while from the shore,
Eat into caverns by the restless wave,
And forest-rustling mountains, comes a voice,
That solemn sounding bids the world prepare.
Then issues forth the storm with sudden burst,
And hurls the whole precipitated air
Down in a torrent. On the passive main
Descends the ethereal force, and with strong gust
Turns from its bottom the discoloured deep.
Through the black night that sits immense around,
Lashed into foam, the fierce conflicting brine
Seems o'er a thousand raging waves to burn.
Meantime the mountain-billows, to the clouds
In dreadful tumult swelled, surge above surge,
Burst into chaos with tremendous roar,
And anchored navies from their stations drive,
Wild as the winds across the howling waste
Of mighty waters; now the inflated wave
Straining they scale, and now impetuous shoot
Into the secret chambers of the deep,
The wintry Baltic thundering o'er their head.
Emerging thence again, before the breath
Of full-exerted heaven they wing their course,
And dart on distant coasts; if some sharp rock,
Or shoal insidious, break not their career,
And in loose fragments fling them floating round.
  Nor less at land the loosened tempest reigns.
The mountain thunders; and its sturdy sons

Stoop to the bottom of the rocks they shade.
Lone on the midnight steep, and all aghast,
The dark wayfaring stranger breathless toils,
And, often falling, climbs against the blast.
Low waves the rooted forest, vexed, and sheds
What of its tarnished honours yet remain;
Dashed down, and scattered, by the tearing wind's
Assiduous fury, its gigantic limbs.
Thus struggling through the dissipated grove,
The whirling tempest raves along the plain;
And on the cottage thatched, or lordly roof,
From pole to pole the rigid influence falls,
Through the still night, incessant, heavy, strong,
And seizes Nature fast. It freezes on;
Till morn, late rising o'er the drooping world,
Lifts her pale eye unjoyous. Then appears
The various labour of the silent night:
Prone from the dripping eave, and dumb cascade,
Whose idle torrents only seem to roar,
The pendent icicle; the frost-work fair,
Where transient hues, and fancied figures, rise;
Wide-spouted o'er the hill, the frozen brook,
A livid tract, cold-gleaming on the morn;
The forest bent beneath the plumy wave;
And by the frost refined the whiter snow,
Incrusted hard, and sounding to the tread
Of early shepherd, as he pensive seeks
His pining flock, or from the mountain top,
Pleased with the slippery surface, swift descends.

The Seasons

THOMSON, 1700–1748

PLEASURES OF MELANCHOLY

LET others love soft Summer's evening smiles,
as, listening to the distant water-fall,
they mark the blushes of the streaky west;
I choose the pale December's foggy glooms.

Then when the sullen shades of evening close,
where thro' the room a blindly-glimmering gleam
the dying embers scatter, far remote
from Mirth's mad shouts that thro' the illumin'd roof
resound with festive echo, let me sit,
blest with the lowly cricket's drowsy dirge.
Then let my thought contemplative explore
this fleeting state of things, the vain delights,
the fruitless toils that still our search elude,
as thro' the wilderness of life we rove.

T. WARTON, 1728–1790

THE WINTER WALK AT NOON

THE night was winter in his roughest mood;
the morning sharp and clear. But now, at noon,
upon the southern side of the slant hills,
and where the woods fence off the northern blast,
the season smiles, resigning all its rage,
and has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
without a cloud, and white without a speck
the dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale;
and through the trees I view the embattled tower,
whence all the music. I again perceive
the soothing influence of the wafted strains,
and settle in soft musings as I tread
the walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms
whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though moveable through all its length
as the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
and, intercepting in their silent fall
the frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.

W. COWPER, 1731–1800

WINTER IN OLNEY

THE WAGGONER

ILL fares the traveller now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team.
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregated loads, adhering close
To the clogg'd wheels; and in its sluggish pace
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He form'd to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes, and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
Oh happy! and in my account, denied
The sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou!
Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpair'd.
The learned finger never need explore
Thy vigorous pulse; and the unhealthful east,
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.

Idem

PICTURES IN THE FIRE

LAUGH ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one; I am conscious, and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has Fancy ludicrous and wild
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages, express'd

In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amused, have I quiescent watch'd
The sooty films that play upon the bars
Pendulous and foreboding, in the view
Of superstition, prophesying still,
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.
'Tis thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps and is refresh'd. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and lost.
Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers; and snapping short
The glassy threads with which the Fancy weaves
Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.
How calm is my recess; and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear,
The silence and the warmth enjoy'd within!

Idem

A WINTER SEASCAPE

THE ocean too has winter views serene,
When all you see through densest fog is seen;
When you can hear the fishers near at hand
Distinctly speak, yet see not where they stand;
Or sometimes them and not their boat discern,
Or half-conceal'd some figure at the stern;
The view's all bounded, and from side to side
Your utmost prospect but a few ells wide;
Boys who, on shore, to sea the pebble cast,
Will hear it strike against the viewless mast;
While the stern boatman growls his fierce disdain,
At whom he knows not, whom he threats in vain.
'Tis pleasant then to view the nets float past,
Net after net till you have seen the last;

And as you wait till all beyond you slip,
A boat comes gliding from an anchor'd ship,
Breaking the silence with the dipping oar,
And their own tones, as labouring for the shore;
Those measured tones which with the scene agree,
And give a sadness to serenity.

The Borough

GEORGE CRABBE, 1754–1832

COLD BLAWS THE WIND

CAULD blows the wind frae north to south,
And drift is driving sairly;
The sheep are couring[1] in the heugh,[2]
Oh sirs! it's winter fairly.
Now up in the morning's no' for me,
Up in the morning early;
I'd rather gae supperless to my bed,
Than rise in the morning early.

Loud rairs the blast amang the woods,
The branches tirling barely,
Amang the chimley taps it thuds,
And frost is nipping sairly.
Now up in the morning's no' for me,
Up in the morning early;
To sit a' the night I'd rather agree,
Than rise in the morning early.

The sun peeps o'er the southlan' hill,
Like ony tim'rous carlie;[3]
Just blinks a wee, then sinks again,
And that we find severly.
Now up in the morning's no' for me,
Up in the morning early;
When snaw blaws into the chimley cheek,
Wha'd rise in the morning early.

[1]cowering [2]glen. [3]Timid maiden.

Nae linties[1] lilt in hedge or bush,
  Poor things they suffer sairly;
In cauldrife[2] quarters a' the night,
  A' day they feed but sparely.
Now up in the morning's no' for me,
  Up in the morning early;
Nae fate can be waur[3] in wintertime,
  Than rise in the morning early.

JOHN HAMILTON

JOHN HAMILTON ADAPTED

Up in the mornings no for me
  Up in the morning early;
When a' the hills are cover'd wi' snaw,
  I'm sure it's winter fairly.

Cold blaws the wind frae east to west,
  The drift is driving sairly;
Sae loud and shrill's I hear the blast,
  I'm sure it's winter fairly.

The birds sit chittering in the thorn,
  A' day they fare but sparely;
And lang's the night frae e'en to morn,
  I'm sure it's winter fairly.

ROBERT BURNS, 1759–1796

THE HOLLY TREE

I

O Reader! hast thou ever stood to see
    The Holly Tree?
The eye that contemplates it well perceives
    Its glossy leaves
Order'd by an intelligence so wise,
As might confound the Atheist's sophistries.

[1]No linnet. [2]freezing. [3]worse.

2

Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen,
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;
But as they grow where nothing is to fear,
Smooth and unarm'd the pointless leaves appear.

3

I love to view these things with curious eyes,
And moralize;
And in this wisdom of the Holly Tree
Can emblems see
Wherewith perchance to make a pleasant rhyme,
One which may profit in the after time.

4

Thus, though abroad perchance I might appear
Harsh and austere,
To those who on my leisure would intrude
Reserved and rude.
Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be
Like the high leaves upon the Holly Tree.

5

And should my youth, as youth is apt I know,
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I day by day
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the Holly Tree.

6

And as when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green,
The Holly leaves a sober hue display
Less bright than they,
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,
What then so cheerful as the Holly Tree?

7

So serious should my youth appear among
The thoughtless throng,
So would I seem among the young and gay
More brave than they,
That in my age as cheerful I might be
As the green winter of the Holly Tree.

ROBERT SOUTHEY, 1774–1843

JOHN CLARE'S WINTER

SNOW STORM

WHAT a night! The wind howls, hisses, and but stops
To howl more loud, while the snow volley keeps
Incessant batter at the window pane,
Making our comfort feel as sweet again;
And in the morning, when the tempest drops,
At every cottage door mountainous heaps
Of snow lie drifted, that all entrance stops
Untill the beesom and the shovel gain
The path, and leave a wall on either side.
The shepherd rambling valleys white and wide
With new sensations his old memory fills,
When hedges left at night, no more descried,
Are turned to one white sweep of curving hills,
And trees turned bushes half their bodies hide.

The boy that goes to fodder with surprise
Walks o'er the gate he opened yesternight.
The hedges all have vanished from his eyes;
E'en some tree tops the sheep could reach to bite.
The novel scene emboldens new delight,
And, though with cautious steps his sports begin,
He bolder shuffles the huge hills of snow,
Till down he drops and plunges to the chin,
And struggles much and oft escape to win—
Then turns and laughs but dare not further go;
For deep the grass and bushes lie below,

Where little birds that soon at eve went in
With heads tucked in the wings now pine for day
And little feel boys o'er their heads can stray.

JOHN CLARE, 1793–1864

WINTER WALK

THE holly bush, a sober lump of green,
Shines through the leafless shrubs all brown and grey,
And smiles at winter be it e'er so keen
With all the leafy luxury of May.
And O it is delicious, when the day
In winter's loaded garment keenly blows
And turns her back on sudden falling snows,
To go where gravel pathways creep between
Arches of evergreen that scarce let through
A single feather of the driving storm;
And in the bitterest day that ever blew
The walk will find some places still and warm
Where dead leaves rustle sweet and give alarm
To little birds that flirt and start away.

Idem

EMMONSAIL'S HEATH

I LOVE to see the old heath's withered brake
Mingle its crimpled leaves with furze and ling,
While the old heron from the lonely lake
Starts slow and flaps his melancholy wing,
And oddling crow in idle motions swing,
On the half rotten ash-tree's topmost twig,
Beside whose trunk the gipsy makes his bed.
Up flies the bouncing woodcock from the brig
Where a black quagmire quakes beneath the tread,
The fieldfares chatter in the whistling thorn
And for the awe round fields and closen rove,
And coy bumbarrels twenty in a drove
Flit down the hedgerows in the frozen plain
And hang on little twigs and start again.

Idem

NOVEMBER

SYBIL of months, and worshipper of winds,
I love thee, rude and boisterous as thou art;
And scraps of joy my wandering ever finds
Mid thy uproarious madness—when the start
Of sudden tempests stirs the forest leaves
Into hoarse fury, till the shower set free
Stills the huge swells. Then ebb the mighty heaves,
That sway the forest like a troubled sea.
I love thy wizard noise, and rave in turn
Half-vacant thoughts and rhymes of careless form;
Then hide me from the shower, a short sojourn,
Neath ivied oak; and mutter to the storm,
Wishing its melody belonged to me,
That I might breathe a living song to thee.

Idem

WORDSWORTH'S WINTER

THE PROUD SWISS

AND oft, when that dread vision hath past by
He holds with God himself communion high,
There where the peal of swelling torrents fills
The sky-roofed temple of the eternal hills;
Or, when upon the mountain's silent brow
Reclined, he sees, above him and below,
Bright stars of ice and azure fields of snow;
While needle peaks of granite shooting bare
Tremble in ever-varying tints of air.
And when a gathering weight of shadows brown
Falls on the valleys as the sun goes down;
And Pikes, of darkness named and fear and storms,[1]
Uplift in quiet their illumined forms,
In sea-like reach of prospect round him spread,
Tinged like an angel's smile all rosy red—
Awe in his breast with holiest love unites,
And the near heavens impart their own delights.

[1]As Schreck-Horn, the pike of terror; Wetter-Horn, the pike of storms, etc.

COUNTRYMAN'S WINTER

When downward to his winter hut he goes,
Dear and more dear the lessening circle grows;
That hut which on the hills so oft employs
His thoughts, the central point of all his joys.
And as a swallow, at the hour of rest,
Peeps often ere she darts into her nest,
So to the homestead, where the grandsire tends
A little prattling child, he oft descends,
To glance a look upon the well-matched pair;
Till storm and driving ice blockade him there.
There, safely guarded by the woods behind,
He hears the chiding of the baffled wind,
Hears Winter calling all his terrors round,
And, blest within himself, he shrinks not from the sound.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770–1850

ROBIN GOODFELLOW

A WHIRL-BLAST from behind the hill
Rushed o'er the wood with startling sound;
Then—all at once the air was still,
And showers of hailstones pattered round.
Where leafless oaks towered high above,
I sat within an undergrove
Of tallest hollies, tall and green;
A fairer bower was never seen.
From year to year the spacious floor
With withered leaves is covered o'er,
And all the year the bower is green.
But see! where'er the hailstones drop
The withered leaves all skip and hop;
There's not a breeze—no breath of air—
Yet here, and there, and every where
Along the floor, beneath the shade
By those embowering hollies made,
The leaves in myriads jump and spring,
As if with pipes and music rare
Some Robin Good-fellow were there,
And all those leaves in festive glee,
Were dancing to the minstrelsy.

Idem

THE SHEPHERD

YET, hail to you
Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
That howl so dismally for him who treads
Companionless your awful solitudes!
There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
To wait upon the storms: of their approach
Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives
His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
And deals it out, their regular nourishment
Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,
And when the flock, with warmer weather climbs
Higher and higher, him his office leads
To watch their goings, whatsoever track
The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun
Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
For rest not needed or exchange of love,
Then from this couch he starts; and now his feet
Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn
Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies,
His staff protending like a hunter's spear,
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams,
Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
Might deign to follow him through what he does
Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,
In those vast regions where his service lies,
A freeman, wedded to his life of hope

And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
With that majestic indolence so dear
To native man. A rambling schoolboy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding; and severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there.
When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun:
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height! like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship.

Idem

THE SOLITARY

THE moon her monthly round
Had not completed since our dame, the queen
Of this one cottage and this lonely dale,
Into my little sanctuary rushed—
Voice to a rueful treble humanised,
And features in deplorable dismay.
I treat the matter lightly, but, alas!
It is most serious: persevering rain
Had fallen in torrents; all the mountain-tops
Were hidden, and black vapours coursed their sides:
This had I seen and saw; but, till she spake
Was wholly ignorant that my ancient Friend—
Who at her bidding early and alone,

Had clomb aloft to delve the moorland turf
For winter fuel—to his noontide meal
Returned not, and now, haply, on the heights
Lay at the mercy of this raging storm.
'Inhuman!'—said I, 'was an old Man's life
Not worth the trouble of a thought?—Alas!
This notice comes too late.' With joy I saw
Her husband enter—from a distant vale.
We sallied forth together; found the tools
Which the neglected veteran had dropped,
But through all quarters looked for him in vain.
We shouted—but no answer! Darkness fell
Without remission of the blast or shower,
And fears for our own safety drove us home.

I, who weep little, did, I will confess,
The moment I was seated here alone,
Honour my little cell with some few tears
Which anger and resentment could not dry.
All night the storm endured; and, soon as help
Had been collected from the neighbouring vale,
With morning we renewed our quest: the wind
Was fallen, the rain abated, but the hills
Lay shrouded in impenetrable mist;
And long and hopelessly we sought in vain:
Till, chancing on that lofty ridge to pass
A heap of ruin—almost without walls
And wholly without roof (the bleached remains
Of a small chapel, where, in ancient time,
The peasants of these lonely valleys used
To meet for worship on that central height)—
We there espied the object of our search.
Lying full three parts buried among tufts
Of heath-plant, under and above him strewn,
To baffle, as he might, the watery storm;
And there we found him breathing peaceably,
Snug as a child that hides itself in sport
'Mid a green hay-cock in a sunny field.
We spake—he made reply, but would not stir
At our entreaty; less from want of power
Than apprehension and bewildering thoughts.

So was he lifted gently from the ground
And with their freight homeward the shepherds moved
Through the dull mist, I following—when a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty city, boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,
Far sinking into splendour—without end!
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright,
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt
With battlements that on their restless fronts
Bore stars—illumination of all gems!
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves
And mountain-steeps and summits, where unto
The vapours had receded, taking there
Their station under a cerulean sky.
Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molten together, and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvellous array
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped.
Right in the midst, where interspace appeared
Of open court, an object like a throne
Under a shining canopy of state
Stood fixed; and fixed resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld

In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power
For admiration and mysterious awe.
This little Vale, a dwelling-place of Man,
Lay low beneath my feet; 'twas visible—
I saw not, but I felt that this was there.
That which I *saw* was the revealed abode
Of Spirits in beatitude; my heart
Swelled in my breast.—'I have been dead,' I cried,
'And now I live! Oh! wherefore *do* I live?'
And with that pang I prayed to be no more!—
—But I forget our Charge, as utterly
I then forgot him:—there I stood and gazed:
The apparition faded not away,
And I descended.
Having reached the house,
I found its rescued inmate safely lodged,
And in serene possession of himself,
Beside a fire whose genial warmth seemed met
By a faint shining from the heart, a gleam
Of comfort, spread over his pallid face.
Great show of joy the housewife made and truly
Was glad to find her conscience set at ease;
And not less glad, for sake of her good name,
That the poor Sufferer had escaped with life.
But, though he seemed at first to have received
No harm, and uncomplaining as before
Went through his usual tasks, a silent change
Soon showed itself; he lingered three short weeks;
And from the cottage hath been borne to-day.

Idem

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S WINTER

Saturday, 12*th*.—Snow upon the ground. . . . All looked cheerful and bright. Helm Crag rose very bold and craggy, a Being by itself, and behind it was the large ridge of mountains, smooth as marble and snow white. All the mountains looked like solid stone, on our left, going from Grasmere, *i.e.* White Moss and Nab Scar. The snow hid all the grass, and all signs of vegetation, and the rocks showed themselves boldly everywhere, and

seemed more stony than rock or stone. The birches on the crags beautiful, red brown and glittering. The ashes glittering spears with their upright stems. The hips very beautiful, and so good!! and, dear Coleridge! I ate twenty for thee, when I was by myself. I came home first. They walked too slow for me. Wm. went to look at Langdale Pikes. We had a sweet invigorating walk. Mr. Clarkson came in before tea. We played at cards. Sate up late. The moon shone upon the waters below Silver How, and above it hung, combining with Silver How on one side, a bowl-shaped moon, the curve downwards, the white fields, glittering roof of Thomas Ashburner's house, the dark yew tree, the white fields gay and beautiful. Wm. lay with his curtains open that he might see it.

Sunday, 13*th*.—Mr. Clarkson left us, leading his horse. . . . The boy brought letters from Coleridge, and from Sara. Sara in bad spirits about C.

Monday, 14*th December*.—Wm. and Mary walked to Ambleside in the morning to buy mouse-traps. . . . I wrote to Coleridge a very long letter while they were absent. Sate by the fire in the evening reading.

. . . . . .

Thursday, 17*th*.—Snow in the night and still snowing. . . . Ambleside looked excessively beautiful as we came out—like a village in another country; and the light cheerful mountains were seen, in the long distance, as bright and as clear as at mid-day, with the blue sky above them. We heard waterfowl calling out by the lake side. Jupiter was very glorious above the Ambleside hills, and one large star hung over the corner of the hills on the opposite side of Rydale water.

Friday, 18*th December*, 1801.—Mary and Wm. walked round the two lakes. I staid at home to make bread. I afterwards went to meet them, and I met Wm. Mary had gone to look at Langdale Pikes. It was a cheerful glorious day. The birches and all trees beautiful, hips bright red, mosses green. I wrote to Coleridge.

. . . . . .

Sunday, 20*th December*.—It snowed all day. It was a very deep snow. The brooms were very beautiful, arched feathers and wiry stalks pointed to the end, smaller and smaller. They waved gently with the weight of the snow.

Monday, 21*st*, being the shortest day, Mary walked to Ambleside for letters. It was a wearisome walk, for the snow lay deep upon the roads, and it was beginning to thaw. I stayed at home. Wm. sate beside me, and read *The Pedlar*. He was in good spirits and full of hope of what he should do with it. He went to meet Mary, and they brought four letters—two from Coleridge, one from Sara, and one from France. Coleridge's were melancholy letters. He had been very ill. We were made very unhappy. Wm. wrote to him, and directed the letter into Somersetshire. I finished it after tea. In the afternoon Mary and I ironed.

Tuesday, 22*nd*.—. . . Wm. composed a few lines of *The Pedlar*. We talked about Lamb's tragedy as we went down the White Moss. We stopped a long time in going to watch a little bird with a salmon-coloured breast, a white cross or T upon its wings, and a brownish back with faint stripes. . . . It began to pick upon the road at the distance of four yards from us, and advanced nearer and nearer till it came within the length of W.'s stick, without any apparent fear of us. As we came up the White Moss, we met an old man, who I saw was a beggar by his two bags hanging over his shoulder; but from half laziness, half indifference, and wanting to *try* him, if he would speak, I let him pass. He said nothing, and my heart smote me. I turned back, and said, 'You are begging?' 'Ay,' says he. I gave him something. William, judging from his appearance, joined in, 'I suppose you were a sailor?' 'Ay,' he replied,'I have been 57 years at sea, twelve of them on board a man-of-war under Sir Hugh Palmer.' 'Why have you not a pension?' 'I have no pension, but I could have got into Greenwich hospital, but all my officers are dead.' He was 75 years of age, had a freshish colour in his cheeks, grey hair, a decent hat with a binding round the edge, the hat worn brown and glossy, his shoes were small thin shoes low in the quarters, pretty good. They had belonged to a gentleman. His coat was frock-shaped coming over his thighs. It had been joined up at the seams behind with paler blue, to let it out, and there were three bell-shaped patches of darker blue behind, where the buttons had been. His breeches were either of fustian, or grey cloth, with strings hanging down, whole and tight. He had a checked shirt on, and a small coloured handkerchief tied round his neck. His bags were hung over each shoulder, and lay on each side of him, below his breast. One was brownish and of coarse

stuff, the other was white with meal on the outside, and his blue waistcoat was whitened with meal.

We overtook old Fleming at Rydale, leading his little Dutchmanlike grandchild along the slippery road. The same face seemed to be natural to them both—the old man and the little child—and they went hand in hand, the grandfather cautious, yet looking proud of his charge. He had two patches of new cloth at the shoulder-blades of his faded claret-coloured coat, like eyes at each shoulder, not worn elsewhere. I found Mary at home in her riding-habit, all her clothes being put up. We were very sad about Coleridge. . . . We stopped to look at the stone seat at the top of the hill. There was a white cushion upon it, round at the edge like a cushion, and the rock behind looked soft as velvet, of a vivid green, and so tempting! The snow too looked as soft as a down cushion. A young foxglove, like a star, in the centre. There were a few green lichens about it, and a few withered brackens of fern here and there upon the ground near, all else was a thick snow; no footmark to it, not the foot of a sheep. . . . We sate snugly round the fire. I read to them the Tale of Constance and the Syrian Monarch, in the *Man of Lawe's Tale*, also some of the *Prologue*. . . .

Wednesday, 23rd.—. . . Mary wrote out the Tales from Chaucer for Coleridge. William worked at *The Ruined Cottage* and made himself very ill. . . . A broken soldier came to beg in the morning. Afterwards a tall woman, dressed somewhat in a tawdry style, with a long checked muslin apron, a beaver hat, and throughout what are called good clothes. Her daughter had gone before, with a soldier and his wife. She had buried her husband at Whitehaven, and was going back into Cheshire.

Thursday, 24th.—Still a thaw. Wm., Mary, and I sate comfortably round the fire in the evening, and read Chaucer. Thoughts of last year. I took out my old Journal.

Friday, 25th.—Christmas Day. We received a letter from Coleridge. His letter made us uneasy about him. I was glad I was not by myself when I read it.

1801

. . . . . .

24th December.—Christmas Eve. William is now sitting by me, at half-past ten o'clock. I have been . . . repeating some of his sonnets to him, listening to his own repeating, reading some of Milton's and the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*. It is a quick, keen frost. . . . Coleridge came this morning with Wedgwood. We all turned out . . . one by one, to meet him. He looked well. We had to tell him of the birth of his little girl, born yesterday morning at six o'clock. William went with them to Wytheburn in the chaise, and M. and I met W. on the Raise. It was not an unpleasant morning. . . . The sun shone now and then, and there was no wind, but all things looked cheerless and distinct; no meltings of sky into mountains, the mountains like stone work wrought up with huge hammers. Last Sunday was as mild a day as I ever remember. . . . Mary and I went round the lakes. There were flowers of various kinds—the topmost bell of a foxglove, geraniums, daisies, a buttercup in the water (but this I saw two or three days before), small yellow flowers (I do not know their name) in the turf. A large bunch of strawberry blossoms. . . . It is Christmas Day, Saturday, 25th December, 1802. I am thirty-one years of age. It is a dull, frosty day.

1802

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812–1889

JANUARY IN SUSSEX WOODS

THE LIFE OF THE FIELDS

THE lost leaves measure our years; they are gone as the days are gone, and the bare branches silently speak of a new year, slowly advancing to its buds, its foliage, and fruit. Deciduous trees associate with human life as this yew never can. Clothed in its yellowish-green needles, its tarnished green, it knows no hope nor sorrow; it is indifferent to winter, and does not look forward to summer. With their annual loss of leaves, and renewal, oak and elm and ash and beech seem to stand by us and to share our thoughts. There is no wind at the edge of the wood, and the few flakes of snow that fall from the overcast sky flutter as they drop, now one side higher and then the other, as the leaves did in the still hours of autumn. The delicacy of the outer boughs of the great trees visible against the dark background of cloud is as beautiful in its own way as the massed foliage of summer. Each slender bough is drawn out to a line; line follows line as shade grows under the pencil, but each of these lines is separate. Great boles of beech, heavy timber at the foot, thus end at their summits in the lightest and most elegant pencilling. Where the birches are tall, sometimes the number and closeness of these bare sprays causes a thickening almost as if there were leaves there. The leaves, in fact, when they come, conceal the finish of the trees; they give colour, but they hide the beautiful structure under them.

RICHARD JEFFERIES, 1848–1887

TREES

THE fiercest wind that ever blew upon the earth, could not take the angles out of the bough of a tree an inch thick. The whole bough bends together, retaining its elbow and angles, and natural form, but affected throughout with curvature in each of its parts and joints. That part of it which was before perpendicular being bent aside, and that which was before sloping, being bent into still greater inclination, the angle at which the two parts meet remains the same; or if the strain be put in the opposite direction, the bough will break long before it loses its angle. You will find it difficult to bend the angles out of the youngest sapling, if they be marked; and absolutely impossible, with a strong bough. You may break it, but you will not destroy its angles. And if you watch a tree in the wildest storm, you will find that though all its boughs are bending, none lose their character but the utmost shoots and sapling spray.

JOHN RUSKIN, 1819–1900

TRAVELLER'S WINTER

TRAVELLER'S WINTER

When God made Eden, I believe,
he had a garden up His sleeve
not meant for mother Eve and Adam,
but for their children when they had 'em.

Not with tall trees, and miles of sward
offering green incense to the Lord,
nor with great vistas set, like blue
windows that God is looking through.

But planned, although a private place
about the length a child can race,
as carefully as when He bent
the globe to make a continent.

A range of hills upon the West,
a miniature of Everest,
with three-inch pines, whose ranks advance
through microscopic gentians,

but leaning a little, as though they were
waiting to leap the glacier,
and wade knee-deep in argent rows,
the small, but everlasting snows.

And in the centre there would be
the dark, unharvestable sea,
drawing a Lilliputian tide
from yellow beaches twelve-foot wide,

yet wide enough for lads to slip
the lean enquiring pirate-ship,
that sails, with youth upon the beam,
the long adventure of the dream.

For in the North the ice-floes call
the small, precarious admiral

to wear beyond the sun, and find
a world, where all are stricken blind.

Where in a cold and grinding hush
the icy arms of danger crush
the little captain, and his bark—
and all, except his heart, is dark.

Or Southward, where the olive trees
hang on the tiny terraces
like puffs of smoke, and all day keep
the quiet attitudes of sleep,

and oleander to her mouth
draws all the summer in the South,
and in the night the fireflies
paint golden maps of Paradise.

Or in the jungle of the East
glitters some smooth, recurrent beast—
the tiger's stripe, the leopard's stars,
bright as the butt-end of cigars,

while with cold eyes that look beyond
embroidered arch, and lily pond,
from period to period
broods in his shrine the lotus-god.

This Eden inside Eden He
made for you, children, furtively,
and never told the Serpent, or
the Archangel, who guards the door.

And thus it was that Abel found
the sword swept four foot from the ground,
and wasn't meant (the thing was plain!)
to interfere with him and Cain.

So, while their parents delved and span
in the cold world outside, they ran
to Eden's gate, and just slipped through
beneath the sword—and so can you!

HUMBERT WOLFE

TRAVELLER'S WINTER

		PAGE
SCYTHIAN WINTER I	*John Dryden*] 1631–1700	93
SCYTHIAN WINTER II	*J. W. Mackail*	94
PRINCESS OF SWEDEN VISITS QUEEN ELIZABETH	*Sixteenth Century*	95
GEORGE TURBERVILLE'S WINTER		
Those Barbarous Coasts	*George Turberville*	98
Rudeness of the Russe	1540–1610	99
And his Wife		99
Cooking and Bedding		100
RICHARD HAKLUYT'S WINTER		
The Winter and Summer Russia	*Richard Hakluyt*	100
The Sharpness of Winter in Muscovie	1553–1616	101
AN ORPHAN OF THE STORM	*Joshua Barnes* 1654–1712	102
THE WONDER OF THE NORTH	*William Cowper* 1731–1800	103
TOURING IN THE GRAND MANNER	*Horace Walpole* 1717–1797	104
YOUNG HIGHLAND RIVER	*Robert Burns* 1759–1796	105
SEBASTIAN VAN STORCK	*Walter Pater* 1839–1894	106
TO MARCUS	*R. L. Stevenson* 1850–1894	107
THE POLES		
Ipsa Silentia Terrent	*Richard Hakluyt* 1553–1616	108
Sea Coale Poisoneth	*Samuel Purchas* 1575–1626	109
The Blink	*Captain James Cook*	110
A Sailor is omnivorous	1728–1779	110
Sea Horses		111
Sir John Franklin	*Officer's Journal* 1858	112
A Dog Victim	*Captain R. F. Scott*	112
Young Hare	1868–1912	114
The Death of Vince		115
Blizzard		115
Terras Turbine Perflant		116
The Parting	*Cowley* 1618–1667	116

		PAGE
Frozen Speech	*Addison* 1672–1719	117
The Far North	*Thomson* 1700–1748	121
The Mollys	*Charles Kingsley* 1819–1875	122
Song of the old Love	*Jean Ingelow* 1830–1897	123
The Great Cold at Christmas	*Jules Verne* 1828–1905	124

TRAVELLER'S WINTER

SCYTHIAN WINTER I

EARLY they stall their flocks and herds; for there
No grass the fields, no leaves the forests wear:
The frozen earth lies buried there, below
A hilly heap, seven cubits deep in snow. . . .
The sun from far peeps with a sickly face;
Too weak the clouds, and mighty fogs to chace. . . .
Swift rivers are with sudden ice constrain'd;
And studded wheels are on its back sustain'd.
An hostry now for waggons, which before
Tall ships of burden on its bosom bore.
The brazen cauldrons, with the frost are flaw'd;
The garment, stiff with ice, at hearths is thaw'd;
With axes first they cleave the wine, and thence
By weight, the solid portions they dispense.
From locks uncomb'd, and from the frozen beard,
Long isicles depend, and crackling sounds are heard.
Mean time perpetual sleet, and driving snow,
Obscure the skies, and hang on herds below.
The starving cattle perish in their stalls,
Huge oxen stand inclos'd in wint'ry walls
Of snow congeal'd; whole herds are bury'd there
Of mighty stags, and scarce their horns appear.
The dext'rous huntsman wounds not these afar,
With shafts, or darts, or makes a distant war
With dogs, or pitches toils to stop their flight:
But close engages in unequal fight.

And while they strive in vain to make their way
Thro' hills of snow, and pitifully bray;
Assaults with dint of sword, or pointed spears:
And homeward, on his back, the joyful burden bears.
The men to subterranean caves retire;
Secure from cold, and crowd the cheerful fire:
With trunks of elms and oaks the hearth they load,
Nor tempt th' inclemency of heav'n abroad.
Their jovial nights in frolics and in play
They pass, to drive the tedious hours away.
And their cold stomachs with crown'd goblets cheer.

VERGIL
The Third Book of the Georgics
tr. by JOHN DRYDEN, 1631-1700

SCYTHIAN WINTER II

BUT not so where the tribes of Scythia border the Maeotic wave and the yellow Danube rolls thick with sand, or where outstretched Rhodope runs back under the mid pole. There they keep their herds shut in stall, and no grass shows on the plain or leaf on the tree; but earth lies featureless in mounded snow and deep fields of ice that rise to seven fathoms, under eternal winter and eternal breath of icy north-west winds. Nor ever does the sun pierce that pallid gloom, neither when he rides his horses up the steep of sky nor when he slakes his headlong chariot in Ocean's ruddy floor. Sudden ice-flakes gather on the running stream, and even now the water bears iron-tired wheels on its back, and gives broad wagons the harbourage it gave to ships before. Brass vessels burst continually, and clothes stiffen on the body, and liquid wine is cut with hatchets; whole pools turn into solid ice, and the rough icicle congeals on the shaggy beard. Meanwhile all the air is a single drift of snow: the cattle die, the broad-backed oxen stand in a frosty shroud, and the deer huddle in troops, benumbed by the fresh masses that their antler tips barely outreach. On them men slip not the hounds, hunt them not with any nets or the terror of crimson-feathered toils; but while they vainly push against the breasting hill, slay them steel in hand and cut them down deep-braying and with

merry clamour carry them home. Themselves in caverns deep sunken under earth they fleet their careless leisure, and roll to the hearth oak from the wood-pile and whole elms to feed the fire. Here they pass the night in games, and with beer and bitter meaths joyously counterfeit draughts of the vine. Such is the wild race of men that lies under the seven stars of the utmost North, buffeted by Rhipaean gales and wrapped in the tawny fur of beasts.

VERGIL
Georgics III
Translated by J. W. MACKAIL

A PRINCESS OF SWEDEN VISITS QUEEN ELIZABETH

BUT she altogether persuaded and armedd at all pointes with the ynwarde Love of your highnes, neither with the terrour of the raginge Seas, neither with the pernicious aire of the bitter wynter, neither with traine nor sweete alluringe of the Kinge her Brother, coulde any thinge be altered from her fixed purpose: But still contynuynge her sute, at the laste Overcame her brother, and was addressedd to her voyadge readie to take shippinge at Stockehollome aforesaid the xijth daie of November then nexte ensewinge. Where (allthoughe quite againste their hartes) The Kinge with the reste of her Brothers and Sisters did honorablie conducte her to the waters syde. What did I saye? honorablie? nay rather mournefullie as to her grave, for who hadd seene the funeralls of the moste famous and beste beloved Prince in the World, mighte here wanted no other token of lyke Hevynes, but onlie the buriall Coffines shrowded in Sabell veyle. Suche were the hartes. Such were the Countenaunces of the departinge Princes. There were sweete Kyssinges intermyxte with salte teares. There were Countenaunces without wordes. There were Clyppinges betwixt the Sisters not able skarse to be unlosed. What shall I saye? my self coulde skarse refraine teares in hearinge the report thereof, finding yet more cause of teares in this that after followeth, The moste vertuous Princes Sophia sister to her grace was so deeplie wounded with sorowe for this her departure, that whiles they were embracynge each eche other, she fell in a Sowne before her sisters feete, and coulde skarselie be revyved, beinge carriedd out of the presse

as one whose sowle hadd departed from the bodie, All this susteynd this ynvincyble Princes for the Love of your majestie, yea more than this (most gracious Quene).

The xiijth of Novembre she sailed to Waxehollome, the xiiith, xvth, and xvjth beinge contynuallye at Sea, they haled over to Hellengenhauen in Eôlande. This daye the Shippe saylinge round abowt the huge and monstruous Rockes of Fynnelande (for suche was their navugacione in windinge compas with out and yanewaye tourninges so near upon those roughe sea mountaines, that sometimes they mighte easilie have fastened their Pykes in the syde of them), there beganne to aryse so Lowde and fierce a Tempeste, that the Steresman him selfe (who only oughte to be the onlie comforte of the shippe) gave over, and poyntyinge to a Rock with his finger. Yonder on yonder Rocke (quod he) by sowthe we shall all be caste awaie, and with the same worde forsooke the helme readye to Leape over boorde, hadd he not been staied by one of the Coumpanie, Yeat suche was the goodness of God, and rather favour of the wyndes than well guidinge of the Pylote, that even now upon the wrecke, the Shippe shoven a side from the Rocke, Overpassed so greate and presente perille. Overpassed I saye, for eskaped how should I saye? since ymmediatelye by necessitie forced they muste venter upon no lesse daungerous a Coaste; but (for that which happened) farre more full of terrour, for directinge foreward their Course, they approached neere a Pointe named the Quinelaxe, a marvailous daungerous passadge; whre beinge under saile the xvijth of November, not able to staye their course, sawe before their eies one shippe rashte in pieces, and the mariners crienge for helpe to him that even now were lyke to be helpeles them selves, for the same course that thother ranne before, they must needes and did soone presently after. But by the grace of God eskaped.

After thus saylinge still betwixte the rockes on thone side, and in the face of their ennemies the Danes (readye allwaïes to pushe in upon them) on thother side, Arryved at laste at Yser in the same countrey of Fynnelande the xth daie of Decembre, and there remanyinge till the xixth of the same (the Countrey not beinge able to provyde them Victuell) standinge betwixte too extremyties, chose rather to hazard themselves in the terryble Seas, then by longer abode to fall into extream penury of necessaries, So that they took shippinge in a most

terryble tempeste what time the storme commynge upon them wonderfull faste, and the wind being outragious and the Shippe boye (for want of heede) havinge cutte the sayle before the ancre was wayed, the Shippe betwixt the full saile and the faste ancreholde, was lyke to putte her nose quite under water or with the recoylinge of the Surges and waves in daunger to be crashte in pieces. And yet this storm with lyke happe overpassed, they sayled forewarde betwixt the Rockes. And towardes nighte as the winde waxed more calme, the Seas also abatinge somewhat in Courage, and her grace allmoste weriedd in thes perplexyties, was desirous to repose her selfe a shore. So that somewhat before nighte she was sette a shoare in her Shippe boate in a land to her unknowen, in wylde and Deserte wooddes, forsaken (as it were) for the unfrendlynes thereof as well as of Brute and Savadge Beastes, as every other inhabytaunte.

And that no parte of her journey might wante cause of feare and pensyvenes, The Boate hadd not yet attayned the Shippe, before there arose a soddaine Tempeste and almoste drowned the Boate, the Shippemaster Pylote, and all the beste maryners. Duringe which time her grace was a shore accompanied but with a verie fewe, and contrarye to her expectacione without house or herberow, havinge no Victuell in a deserte nor entertaynement in a barren Countrey, muste needes with gladsome will, yelde over all that wynter nighte in all thextremytie of colde to the colde grownde. And because the place mynistred no soccoure from the smarte boisteous wyndes, muste be contented to shrowde her selfe in her servantes cloakes whiles they were enforced to skippe about therewhiles in their Jerkines, to gette heate to their Lymmes, which otherwise mighte have waxed styffe before morninge throughe the hoarye froste and wante of warmer mantelles. Besides this they hadde no meate to refreshe their houngrie bodies, but such fowle, as some of the Servauntes might happelie kill with their goonnes. A verie freshe entertaynemente to refreshe a weried Princess. But such was the extremytie of the time, and the wyldnes of the Savadge wyldernes; wherewith She Seemed almoste nothinge to be dismaiedd, But cherefullie callinge her Servauntes together. Come hither (quod She) what is this for a colde Lodginge. Lett us nowe talke of the Quene of Englande; the Remembraunce of whom hathe allwaies hitherto putte awaie all troubles, feares and daungers out of my heade; and so passed over all that colde

nighte. The nexte daye tooke Shippinge, and arrived at Reuell, a citie within the province of Lyselande. At which place (as the Solempnitie of the time required) stayenge for a Seasone prepared with all possible Reverence and Relligione to Celebrate the feasts of the Natyvytie of Christ.

Sixteenth Century

GEORGE TURBERVILLE'S WINTER

THOSE BARBAROUS COASTS

THE Russie men are round of bodies, fully fac'd,
The greatest part with bellies bigge that overhang the waste,
Flat headed for the most, with faces nothing faire,
But browne, by reason of the stove, and closenesse of the aire:
It is their common use to shave or els to sheare
Their heads, for none in all the land long lolling locks doth weare,
Unless perhaps he have his sovereigne prince displeas'd,
For then he never cuts his haire, untill he be appeas'd. . . .
Their garments be not gay, nor handsome to the eye,
A cap aloft their heads they have, that standeth very hie,
Which Colpack they do terme. They wear no ruffes at all:
The best have collers set with pearle, which they Rubasca call. . . .
His portkies, which in stead of better breeches be:
Of linnen cloth that garment is, no codpiece is to see. . . .
The maners are so Turkie like, the men so full of guile,
The women wanton, Temples stuft with idols that defile
The seats that sacred ought to be, the customes are so quaint,
As if I would describe the whole, I feare my pen would faint.
. . . Wild Irish are as civill as the Russies in their kinde,
Hard choice which is the best of both, ech bloody, rude and blinde.
If thou bee wise, as wise thout art, and wilt be ruld by me,
Live still at home, and covet not those barbarous coasts to see

GEORGE TURBERVILLE, 1540–1610.

RUDENESS OF THE RUSSE

My Dancie deare, when I recount within my brest,
My London friends, and wonted mates, and thee above the rest:
I feele a thousand fits of deepe and deadly woe,
To thinke that I from land to sea, from blisse to bale did go.
I left my native soile, full like a retchless man,
And unacquainted of the coast, among the Russes ran:
A people passing rude, to vices vile inclinde,
Folke fit to be of Bacchus traine, so quaffing is their kinde.
Drinke is their whole desire, the pot is all their pride,
The sobrest head doth once a day stand needful of a guide. . . .
Their Idoles have their hearts, on God they never call,
Unlesse it be Nichola Bough that hangs against the wall. . . .
Besides their private gods, in open places stand
Their crosses unto which they crooche, and blesse themselves with hand.
Devoutly downe they ducke, with forehead to the ground,
Was never more deceit in ragges, and greasie garments found.

Idem

AND HIS WIFE

Almost the meanest man in all the countrey rides,
The woman eke, against our use, her trotting horse bestrides. . . .
Their gate is very brave, their countenance wise and sadde,
And yet they follow fleshly lustes, their trade of living bad. . . .
Is not the meanest man in all the land but hee
To buy her painted colours doeth allow his wife a fee,
Wherewith she deckes her selfe, and dies her tawnie skinne,
She pranks and paints her smoakie face, both brow, lip, cheeke and chinne.

Idem

COOKING AND BEDDING

THEY put their victuals in a pan, and so they bake their meate. . . .
No pewter to be had, no dishes but of wood,
No use of trenchers, cups cut out of birche are very good.
They use but wooden spoones, which hanging in a case
Each Mowsike at his girdle ties, and thinks it no disgrace. . . .
And in that very place which they most sacred deeme,
The stranger lies: a token that his guest he doth esteeme.
Where he is wont to have a beares skinne for his bed,
And must, in stead of pillow, clap his saddle to his head.
In Russia other shift there is not to be had,
For where the bedding is not good, the boalsters are but bad.
I wisht thee oft with us, save that I stood in feare
Thou wouldst have loathed to have layd thy limmes upon a beare,
As I and Stafford did, that was my mate in bed:
An yet (we thanke the God of heaven) we both right well have sped.
Loe thus I make an ende: none other newes to thee,
But that the countrey is too colde, the people beastly bee.

Idem

RICHARD HAKLUYT'S WINTER

THE WINTER AND SUMMER RUSSIA

THE whole Countrey differeth very much from it selfe, by reason of the yeere: so that a man would marveile to see the great alteration and difference betwixt the Winter and the Summer Russia. The whole Countrey in the Winter lieth under snow, which falleth continually, and is sometime of a yard or two thicke, but greater towards the North. The Rivers and other waters are all frosen up a yard or more thicke, how swift or broade soever they bee. And this continueth commonly five moneths, viz from the beginning of November till towards the ende of March, what time the snow beginneth to melt. So that it would breede a frost in a man to looke abroad at that time, and see the Winter face of that Countrey. The sharpnesse of the aire you may judge of by this: for that water dropped down

or cast up into the air congealeth into yce before it come to the ground. In the extremitie of Winter, if you holde a pewter dish or pot in your hand, or any other mettall (except in some chamber where their warm stoaves bee) your fingers will friese fast unto it, and drawe off the skinne at the parting. When you passe out of a warme roome into a colde, you shall sensibly feele your breath to waxe starke, and even stifeling with the colde, as you drawe it in and out.

Divers not onely that travell abroad, but in the very markets and streetes of their Townes, are mortally pinched and killed withall: so that you shall see many drop downe in the streetes; many travellers brought into the Townes sitting dead and stiffe in their Sleds. Divers lose their noses, the tips of their eares, and the bals of their cheeks, their toes, feet, etc. Many times (when the Winter is very hard and extreeme) the beares and woolfes issue by troupes out of the woods, driven by hunger, and enter the villages, tearing and ravening all they can finde; so that the inhabitants are faine to flie for safegard of their lives. And yet in the Sommer time you shall see such a new hiew and face of a Countrey, the woods (for the most part which are all of firre and birch) so fresh and so sweete, the pastures and medows so greene and well growen, (and that upon the sudden) such variety of flowers, such noyse of birdes (specially of Nightingales, that seeme to be more lowde and of a more variable note then in other Countreys) that a man shall not lightly travell in a more pleasant Countrey.

RICHARD HAKLUYT, 1553–1616

THE SHARPNESS OF THE WINTER IN MOSCOVIE[1]

THEY [the Moscovites] hunt their buffes for the most part a horsebacke, but their Beares a foot, with wooden forkes. The north parts of the Countrey are reported to be so cold that the very ice or water which distilleth out of the moist wood which they lay upon the fire is presently congealed and frozen: the diversity growing suddenly to be so great that in one and the selfe same firebrand, a man shall see both fire and ice. When the winter doth once begin there it doth still more and more

[1]From *The Booke of the great and mighty Emperor of Russia*, etc. etc.: drawen by Richard Chancelour.

increase by perpetuitie of cold: neither doth that cold slake, until the force of the Sunne beames doth dissolve the cold, and make glad the earth, returning to it againe. Our mariners which we left in the ship in the meane time to keepe it, in their going up onely from their cabbins to the hatches, had their breath oftentimes so suddenly taken away, that they eftsoones fell downe as men very neere dead, so great is the sharpnesse of that colde climate: but as for the South parts of the Countrey, they are somewhat more temperate.

Idem

AN ORPHAN OF THE STORM[1]

It is credibly reported, that about this time, [Sept. 1368] during a great Storm and an extraordinary high Tide, there was seen a Mermaid or Sea-woman swimming in the Zuyderzee between Campen and Edam: Who being taken and brought to Edam, after she was well cleansed from the Sea-moss, which by her long Continuance in that Element had grown about her, was not only exactly like another Woman, but endured to be Apparell'd, and would feed on Meats as others did, thô indeed she sought all Means to escape, and return again to her Watry Habitation, but she was always prevented by those who had the Care of her, and watch'd her very narrowly. She learn'd to spin and exercise other Feminine Duties, being dayly seen by vast Numbers of People, many of whom gave undoubted Testimony of the Truth of the Matter, both describing her Features, and attesting, that she lived fifteen Years after she was first taken, and was lastly buried there in the Church-yard of Edam. If the Reader wants Faith to credit such Matters, I entreat him to consider, that an Historian is not obliged to gain an Infallible Assurance of all that he says; but however that since so great and so wise Men have confirmed such things unto Us, he who will not allow such authentick and probable Testimonies, not only wants Faith, but perhaps Modesty and Discretion also.

JOSHUA BARNES, 1654–1712

[1]*The History of King Edward III*, etc.

THE WONDER OF THE NORTH

THE EMPRESS OF RUSSIA'S PALACE OF ICE

. . . Less worthy of applause, though more admired,
Because a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ!
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the North. No forest fell
When thou wouldst build; no quarry sent its stores
To enrich thy walls: but thou didst hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
In such a palace Aristaeus found
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale
Of his lost bees to her maternal ear:
In such a palace Poetry might place
The armoury of Winter; where his troops,
The gloomy clouds, find weapons, arrowy sleet,
Skin-piercing volley, blossom-bruising hail,
And snow, that often blinds the traveller's course,
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.
Silently as a dream the fabric rose;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there.
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoin'd; nor other cement ask'd
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps gracefully disposed, and of all hues,
Illumined every side; a watery light
Gleam'd through the clear transparency, that seem'd
Another moon new risen, or meteor fallen
From heaven to earth, of lambent flame serene.
So stood the brittle prodigy; though smooth
And slippery to materials, yet frost bound
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,
That royal residence might well befit,
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flowers, that fear'd no enemy but warmth,
Blush'd on the panels. Mirror needed none
Where all was vitreous; but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seem'd at least commodious seat) were there;

Sofa, and couch, and high-built throne august.
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.
Alas! 'twas but a mortifying stroke
Of undesign'd severity, that glanced
—Made by a monarch—on her own estate,
Of human grandeur and the courts of kings.
'Twas transient in its nature, as in show
'Twas durable; as worthless, as it seem'd
Intrinsically precious; to the foot
Treacherous and false; it smiled and it was cold.

The Winter Morning Walk
WILLIAM COWPER, 1731–1800

TOURING IN THE GRAND MANNER

TURIN, *Nov.* 11, 1739, N.S.

TO RICHARD WEST, ESQ.

So, as the song says, we are in fair Italy! I wonder we are; for on the very highest precipice of Mount Cenis, the devil of dischord, in the similitude of sour wine, had got amongst our Alpine savages, and set them a-fighting with Gray and me in the chairs: they rushed him by on a crag, where there was scarce room for a cloven foot. The least slip had tumbled us into such a fog, and such an eternity, as we should never have found our way out of again. We were eight days in coming hither from Lyons; the four last in crossing the Alps. Such uncouth rocks, and such uncomely inhabitants! My dear West, I hope I shall never see them again! At the foot of Mount Cenis we were obliged to quit our chaise, which was taken all to pieces and loaded on mules; and we were carried in low arm-chairs on poles, swathed in beaver bonnets, beaver gloves, beaver stockings, muffs, and bear-skins. When we came to the top, behold the snows fallen! and such quantities, and conducted by such heavy clouds that hung glouting, that I thought we could never have waded through them. The descent is two leagues, but

steep and rough as O**** father's face, over which, you know, the devil walked with hobnails in his shoes. But the dexterity and nimbleness of the mountaineers are inconceivable: they run with you down steeps and frozen precipices, where no man, as men are now, could possibly walk. We had twelve men and nine mules to carry us, our servants, and baggage, and were above five hours in this agreeable jaunt! The day before, I had a cruel accident, and so extraordinary an one, that it seems to touch upon the traveller. I had brought with me a little black spaniel of King Charles's breed; but the prettiest, fattest, dearest creature! I had let it out of the chaise for the air, and it was waddling along close to the head of the horses, on the top of the highest Alps, by the side of a wood of firs. There darted out a young wolf, seized poor dear Tory by the throat, and, before we could possibly prevent it, sprung up the side of the rock and carried him off. The postilion jumped off and struck at him with his whip, but in vain. I saw it and screamed, but in vain; for the road was so narrow, that the servants that were behind could not get by the chaise to shoot him. What is the extraordinary part is, that it was but two o'clock, and broad sunshine. It was shocking to see anything one loved run away with to so horrid a death.

Just coming out of Chamberri, which is a nasty old hole, I copied an inscription set up at the end of a great road, which was practised through an immense solid rock by bursting it asunder with gunpowder. The Latin is pretty enough, and so I send it to you. . . .

HORACE WALPOLE, 1717–1797

YOUNG HIGHLAND RIVER

Loud blaw the frosty breezes,
The snaws the mountains cover;
Like winter in me seizes,
Since my young Highland River
Far wanders nations over.
Where'er he go, where'er he stray,
May heaven be his warden,
Return him safe to fair Strathspey,
And bonnie Castle-Gordon.

The trees, now naked groaning,
  Shall soon wi' leaves be hinging,
The birdies, dowie moaning,
  Shall a' be blythely singing,
  And every flower be springing;
Sae I'll rejoice the li-lang day,
  When, by his mighty warden,
My youth's returned to fair Strathspey
  And bonnie Castle-Gordon.

ROBERT BURNS

SEBASTIAN VAN STORCK

It was a winter scene, by Adrian van de Velde, or by Isaac van Ostade. All the delicate poetry together with all the delicate comfort of the frosty season was in the leafless branches turned to silver, the furred dresses of the skaters, the warmth of the red-brick house-fronts under the gauze of white fog, the gleams of pale sunlight on the cuirasses of the mounted soldiers as they receded into the distance. Sebastian van Storck, confessedly the most graceful performer in all that skating multitude, moving in endless maze over the vast surface of the frozen water-meadow, liked best this season of the year for its expression of a perfect impassivity, or at least of a perfect repose. The earth was, or seemed to be, at rest, with a breathlessness of slumber which suited the young man's peculiar temper. The heavy summer, as it dried up the meadows now lying dead below the ice, set free a crowded and competing world of life, which, while it gleamed very pleasantly russet and yellow for the painter Albert Cuyp, seemed wellnigh to suffocate Sebastian van Storck. Yet with all his appreciation of the national winter, Sebastian was not altogether a Hollander. His mother, of Spanish descent and Catholic, had given a richness of tone and form to the healthy freshness of the Dutch physiognomy, apt to preserve its youthfulness of aspect far beyond the period of life usual with other peoples. The mixed expression charmed the eye of Isaac van Ostade, who had painted his portrait from a sketch taken at one of those skating parties, with his plume of squirrel's tail and fur muff, in all the modest pleasantness of boyhood. . . .

Dutch aristocracy had put forth all its graces to become the winter morn: and it was characteristic of the period that the artist tribe was there, on a grand footing,—in waiting for the lights and shadows they liked best. The artists were, in truth, an important body just then, as a natural consequence of the nation's hard-won prosperity; helping it to a full consciousness of the genial yet delicate homeliness it loved, for which it had fought so bravely, and was ready at any moment to fight anew, against man or the sea. Thomas de Keyser, who understood better than anyone else the kind of quaint new Atticism which had found its way into the world over those waste salt marshes, wondering whether quite its finest type as he understood it could ever actually be seen there, saw it at last, in lively motion, in the person of Sebastian van Storck. . . .

Imaginary Portraits
WALTER PATER, 1839–1894

TO MARCUS

You have been far, and I
Been farther yet,
Since last, in foul or fair
An impecunious pair,
Below this northern sky
Of ours, we met.

Now winter nights shall see
Again, us two
While howls the tempest higher
Sit warmly by the fire
And dream and plan, as we
Were wont to do.

And, hand in hand, at large
Our thoughts shall walk
While storm and gusty rain
Again and yet again,
Shall drive their noisy charge
Across the talk.

The pleasant future still
    Shall smile to me
  And hope with wooing hands
  Wave on to fairy lands
All over dale and hill
    And earth and sea.

And you who doubt the sky
    And fear the sun—
  You—*Christian* with the pack—
  —You shall not wander back
For I am *Hopeful*—I
    Will cheer you on.

Come—where the great have trod,
    The great shall lead—
  Come, elbow through the press,
  Pluck Fortune by the dress—
By God, we must—by God,
    We shall succeed.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, 1850–1894

THE POLES

IPSA SILENTIA TERRENT

THE next day being the 18 of September, we entred into the Haven, and there came to an anker at 6 fadoms. This haven runneth into the maine, about two leagues, and is in bredth halfe a league, wherein were many seale fishes and other great fishes, and upon the maine we saw beares, great deere, foxes, with divers strange beasts as guloines, and such other which were to us unknowen, and also wonderfull. Thus remaining in this haven the space of a weeke, seeing the yeare farre spent, and also very evil wether, as frost, snow, and haile, as though it had beene the deepe of winter, we thought best to winter there. Wherefore we sent out three men Southsouthwest, to search if they could find people, who went three days journey,

but could finde none: after that we sent other three Westward foure daies journey, which also returned without finding any people. Then sent we three men Southeast three dayes journey, whom like sort returned without finding of people, or any similitude of habitation.

Voyages
RICHARD HAKLUYT, (?) 1553–1616

Extract from 'The true copie of a note found written in one of the two ships, to wit, the *Speranza*, which wintered in Lappia, where Sir Hugh Willoughby and all his companie died, being frozen to death. Anno. 1553.

SEA COALE POISONETH

THE seventh, it was still foul weather, and we had a great storme with a North-east Wind, which brought an extreame cold with it, at which time wee knew not what to doe, and while we sate consulting together, what were best for us to doe, one of our companions gave us counsell to burne some of the Sea-coales that we had brought out of the ship, which would cast a great heate and continue long, and so at Evening we made a great fire thereof, which cast a great heat: at which time wee were very carefull to keepe it in: for that the heate beeing so great a comfort unto us, we tooke care how to make it continue long: whereupon wee agreed to stop up all the doores and the Chimney, thereby to keepe in the heate, and so went into our Cabins to sleepe, well comforted with the heate, and so lay a great while talking together; but at last we were taken with a great swounding and dazeling in our heads, yet some more then other some, which we first perceived by a sicke man, and therefore the lesse able to beare it, and found our selves to be very ill at ease, so that some of us that were strongest, start out of their Cabins, and first opened the Chimney, and then the doores, but he that opened the doore fell downe in a swound upon the Snow, which I hearing, as lying in my Cabin next to the doore, start up, and casting Vinegar in his face, recovered him againe, and so he rose up; and when the doores were open, we all recovered our healths againe, by reason of the cold Ayre, and so the cold which before had beene so great an Enemy unto us, was then the onely reliefe that wee had, otherwise without

doubt, we had dyed in a sudden swound, after that the Master, when we were come to our selves againe, gave every one of us a little Wine to comfort our hearts.

His Pilgrims
PURCHAS, 1575–1626

'THE BLINK'

SOME time before noon, we perceived a brightness in the Northern horizon, like that reflected from ice, commonly called the blink. It was little noticed, from a supposition that it was improbable we should meet with ice so soon. And yet, the sharpness of the air, and gloominess of the weather, for two or three days past, seemed to indicate some sudden change. About an hour after, the sight of a large field of ice, left us no longer in doubt about the cause of the brightness of the horizon. At half past two, we tacked, close to the edge of the ice, in twenty-two fathoms water, being then in the latitude of 70° 41′; not being able to stand on any farther. For the ice was quite impenetrable, and extended from West by South, to East by North, as far as the eye could reach. Here were abundance of sea-horses; some in the water; but far more upon the ice. I had thoughts of hoisting out the boats to kill some; but the wind freshening, I gave up the design; and continued to ply to the Southward, or rather to the Westward; for the wind came from that quarter.

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK, 1728–1779

'A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean undertaken by the Command of His Majesty for making Discoveries of the Northern Hemisphere.' Second Edition. Printed by H. Hughs. 1785.

A SAILOR IS OMNIVOROUS

AT eight in the morning of the 19th, the wind veering back to West, I tacked to the Northward; and, at noon, the latitude was 70° 6′, and the longitude 196° 42′. In this situation, we had a good deal of drift-ice about us; and the main ice was about two leagues to the North. At half past one, we got in with the edge of it. It was not so compact as that which we had seen to the

Northward; but it was too close, and in too large pieces, to attempt forcing the ships through it. On the ice lay a prodigious number of sea-horses; and as we were in want of fresh provisions, the boats from each ship were sent to get some.

By seven o'clock in the evening, we had received, on board the *Resolution*, nine of these animals; which, till now, we had supposed to be sea-cows; so that we were not a little disappointed, especially some of the seamen, who, for the novelty of the thing, had been feasting their eyes for some days past. Nor would they have been disappointed now, nor have known the difference, if we had not happened to have one or two on board, who had been in Greenland, and declared what animals these were, and that no one ever eat of them. But, notwithstanding this, we lived upon them as long as they lasted; and there were few on board who did not prefer them to our salt meat.

Idem

'SEA HORSES'

THEY lie, in herds of many hundreds, upon the ice; puddling one over the other like swine; and roar or bray very loud; so that, in the night, or in foggy weather, they gave us notice of the vicinity of ice, before we could see it. We never found the whole herd asleep; some being always upon the watch. These, on the approach of the boat, would wake those next to them; and the alarm being thus gradually communicated, the whole herd would be awake presently. But they were seldom in a hurry to get away, till after they had once been fired at.

Then they would tumble one over the other, into the sea, in the utmost confusion. And, if we did not, at the first discharge, kill those we fired at, we generally lost them though mortally wounded. They did not appear to us to be that dangerous animal some authors have described; not even when attacked. They are rather more so, to appearance than in reality. Vast numbers of them would follow, and come close up to the boats. But the flash of a musquet in the pan, or even the bare pointing of one at them, would send them down in an instant.

Idem

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN

December 21.—The winter solstice. We have about half an hour's partial daylight, by which the type of *The Times* newspaper may be just distinguished on a board facing the south, where, near noon, a slight glimmer of light is refracted above the horizon, while in the zenith and northward the stars are shining brilliantly. In the absence of *light and shade* we cannot see to walk over the ice, for the hummocks can scarcely be distinguished from the floe; all presents a uniform level surface, and, in walking, one constantly falls into the fissures, or runs full butt against the blocks of ice. We must now, therefore, be content with an hour or two's tramp alongside, or on our snow-covered deck under housing; and, during the remainder of the day, we sit below in our little cabin, which has now crystallised by the breath condensing and freezing on the bulkheads, and we endeavour to read and talk away the time. But our subjects of conversation are miserably worn out; our stories are old and oft-repeated; we start impossible theories, and we bet upon the results of our new observations as to our progress, as we unconsciously drift and drift before the gale. At night we retire to our beds, thankful that another day has passed; a deathlike stillness reigns around, broken only by the ravings of some sleep-walker, the tramp of the watch upon deck, a passing bear causing a general rousing of our dogs, or a simultaneous rush of these poor ravenous creatures at our cherished stores of seal-beef in the shrouds; and, as we listen to the distant groaning and sighing of the ice, we thank God that we have still a home in these terrible wastes.

1858

Journal of an Officer on Expedition in search of Sir John Franklin

A DOG VICTIM[1]

. . . ABOUT ten minutes after we had left the sledges, Hare, who was at the rear of the party, was reported to be missing, and at

[1]*The Voyage of the Discovery.*

this moment an unusually violent squall prevented us from seeing even one another. I immediately ordered a chain to be formed at right angles and extending across our track, each man keeping in touch with the next with the idea of intercepting Hare when he came on. We shouted and blew whistles, and whilst this was going on, Evans stepped back on to a patch of bare smooth ice, and shot out of sight immediately.

Thinking the slope to be one of the short ones so common in the folds of the hills, Barne cautioned his men to remain where they were; and, sitting down, deliberately started to slide in Evans's track. In a moment or two the slope grew steeper, and soon he was going at a pace which left him with no power to control his movements; he whipped out his clasp knife and dug it into the ice, but the blade snapped off short and failed to check his wild career. In the mad rush he had time to realise the mistake that had been made and to wonder vaguely what would come next. In a flash, ice changed to snow, which grew softer until, in a smother of flying particles, his rapid flight was arrested, and he stood up to find Evans within a few feet of him. They had scarcely exchanged greetings when a third figure came hurtling down on them out of the gloom and was brought to rest at their feet. This was Quartley, who, growing impatient at Barne's absence, and of course ignorant of what lay below, had started to slide down on the same track, and had been swept down the descent in the same breathless manner. Realising the impossibility of ascending again by the way they had come, they started to descend, but within four paces of the place at which they had come to rest they found that the slope ended suddenly in a steep precipice beyond which they could see nothing but the clouds of whirling snow. Even as they recoiled from this new danger and dimly realised the merciful patch of soft snow which had saved them from it, a yelping dog flew past them, clawing madly at the icy slope, and disappeared for ever into the gloom beyond.

CAPTAIN SCOTT, R.N., 1868–1912

YOUNG HARE

A VERY extraordinary thing has happened. At 10 a.m. a figure was seen descending the hillside. At first we thought it must be someone who had been for an early walk; but it was very soon seen that the figure was walking weakly, and, immediately after, the men who were working in the hut were seen streaming out towards it. In a minute or two we recognised the figure as that of young Hare, and in less than five he was on board. He was taken into the magnetic house, as it was thought unwise to take him into the full warmth of the living-quarters at once. We soon discovered that, though exhausted, weak and hungry, he was in full possession of his faculties and quite free from frost-bites. He went placidly off to sleep whilst objecting to the inadequacy of a milk diet. It was much later that we learnt his story. It appears that he had left his companions intentionally, on finding that it was impossible to stand alone in his fur boots. He had shouted to the others that he meant to return to the sledges and change into leather boots, and he was under the impression that they had heard him and had quite understood the reason. He made the best of his way in the direction in which he supposed the sledges to be, but, as was natural, in the thick snowdrift he could see no sign of them. For long he wandered forward and backward, intent on his search; but gradually he got exhausted, and then he was conscious that his footsteps were aimless. The last thing he remembered was making towards a patch of rock, where he hoped to find some shelter from the raging wind. When he awoke this morning he found himself covered with snow, but, on raising himself on his elbow, he saw that he was on a slope under Castle Rock, and, glancing about him, recognised Crater Hill and other known eminences, and realised exactly where he was and the direction in which the ship lay. He started towards her, but found himself so stiff that for a long way he was obliged to crawl on hands and knees. But the stiffness wore off, and he was able to raise himself at length, and with some rests, to reach the slope where we had first seen him.

He must have lain under the snow for thirty-six hours, but it took a long time to persuade him of this; he found it hard to believe that this was the second day after the accident. I cannot

but believe that his preservation is unique, and almost miraculous. The boy, who is only eighteen, has been forty hours without food, and sixty without warm food; he must possess great stamina to have come through without hurt.

Idem

THE DEATH OF VINCE

In the afternoon we weighed our anchors and steamed round to the scene of the accident, when every detail of what we now called 'Danger Slope' could be clearly seen. It is very steep for about 400 or 500 yards, and ends in a sheer drop into the sea. . . .

We had now finally and sadly to resign ourselves to the loss of our shipmate, and the thought was grievous to us all. From the moment when he joined us at the Cape of Good Hope, Vince had been popular with all; always obliging and always cheerful, I learnt that he had never shown these qualities more markedly than during the short sledge journey which brought him to his untimely end. His pleasant face and ready wit served to dispel the thought of hardship and difficulty to the end. Life was a bright thing to him, and it is something to think that death must have come quickly in the grip of that icy sea.

Idem

BLIZZARD

It is curious to lie like this in a blizzard; luckily the temperature has gone up, as it always does on these occasions. The rise is apparent in every way; we can handle things more easily, our breath does not rise in such steaming clouds; but above all, there is a milder and easier feel in the air once one is out of the lash of the wind. Our discomforts come now more from the miserably chilly wetness of everything than from the actual cold.

Meanwhile the storm without is raging unabated, and the thin canvas of the tent is flapping with a continuous roar that drowns all noise within; conversation can only be carried on by shouting. Still, the main point is that we are all in the sleeping-bag and safe and sound if not very comfortable, so in due course we settle ourselves in its depths and draw over us the protecting flap. There will be no shivering to-night at any rate, and we can

smoke our pipes with greater ease in consequence; here, in the depths of the bag, the mad flapping of the tent has sunk to distant thunder.

Idem

TERRAS TURBINE PERFLANT[1]

THAT night a blizzard commenced, increasing in fury from moment to moment. They now found that the place chosen for the hut for shelter was worse than useless. They had far better have built it in the open, for the fierce wind, instead of striking them directly, was deflected on to them in furious whirling gusts. Heavy blocks of snow and rock placed on the roof were whirled away, and the canvas ballooned up, tearing and straining at its securings—its disappearance could only be a question of time. They had erected their tent with some valuables inside close to the hut; it had been well spread and more than amply secured with snow and boulders, but one terrific gust tore it up and whirled it away. Inside the hut they waited for the roof to vanish, wondering what they could do if it went, and vainly endeavouring to make it secure. After fourteen hours it went, as they were trying to pin down one corner. The smother of snow was on them, and they could only dive for their sleeping-bags with a gasp. Bowers put his head out once and said, 'We're all right,' in as near his ordinary tones as he could compass. The others replied, 'Yes, we're all right,' and all were silent for a night and half a day whilst the wind howled on; the snow entered every chink and crevice of the sleeping-bags, and the occupants shivered and wondered how it would all end.

CAPTAIN R. F. SCOTT, R.N., C.V.O.

THE PARTING

As Men in *Green-land* left behind the *Sun*
From their *Horizon* run;
And thought upon the sad half year
Of *Cold* and *Darkness* they must suffer there:

[1] *Scott's Last Expedition.*

So on my parting *Mistress* did I look,
With such swoln eyes my farewel took;
Ah! my fair *Star!* said I;
Ah those blest Lands to which *bright Thou* dost fly!

In vain the Men of *Learning* comfort me;
And say I'm in a warm *degree*;
Say what they please; I say and swear
'Tis beyond *eighty* at least, if you're not here.

It is, it is; I tremble with the *Frost*,
And know that I the *Day* have lost;
And those wild things which *Men* they call
I find to be but *Bears* or *Foxes* all.

Return, return, gay *Planet* of mine *East*,
Of all that shines Thou much the *Best!*
And as thou now *descend'st to Sea;*
More fair and fresh *rise* up from thence to Me.

Thou, who in many a Propriety,
So truly art the *Sun* to Me,
Adde one more *likeness*, which I'm sure you can,
And let *Me* and *My Sun* beget a *Man*.

COWLEY, 1618–1667

FROZEN SPEECH

Splendide mendax.—*Hor.*

From my own Apartment, November 22.

THERE are no books which I more delight in than in travels, especially those that describe remote countries, and give the writer an opportunity of showing his parts without incurring any danger of being examined or contradicted. Among all the authors of this kind, our renowned countryman Sir John Mandeville has distinguished himself by the copiousness of his invention and the greatness of his genius. The second to Sir John I take to have been Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, a person of infinite adventure and unbounded imagination. One reads the voyages of these two great wits with as much astonishment as

the travels of Ulysses in Homer, or of the Red-Cross Knight in Spenser. All is enchanted ground and fairy land.

I have got into my hands, by great chance, several manuscripts of these two eminent authors, which are filled with greater wonders than any of those they have communicated to the public; and indeed, were they not so well attested, would appear altogether improbable. I am apt to think, the ingenious authors did not publish them with the rest of their works, lest they should pass for fictions and fables: a caution not unnecessary, when the reputation of their veracity was not yet established in the world. But as this reason has now no further weight, I shall make the public a present of these curious pieces at such times as I shall find myself unprovided with other subjects.

The present paper I intend to fill with an extract of Sir John's journal, in which that learned and worthy knight gives an account of the freezing and thawing of several short speeches which he made in the territories of Nova Zembla. I need not inform my reader that the author of *Hudibras* alludes to this strange quality in that cold climate, when, speaking of abstracted notions clothed in a visible shape, he adds that apt simile,

Like words congealed in northern air.

Not to keep my reader any longer in suspense, the relation put into modern language is as follows:

'We were separated by a storm in the latitude of 73, insomuch that only the ship which I was in, with a Dutch and a French vessel, got safe into a creek of Nova Zembla. We landed, in order to refit our vessels and store ourselves with provisions. The crew of each vessel made themselves a cabin of turf and wood, at some distance from each other, to fence themselves against the inclemencies of the weather, which was severe beyond imagination. We soon observed that in talking to one another we lost several of our words, and could not hear one another at above two yards' distance, and that too when we sat very near the fire. After much perplexity I found that our words froze in the air before they could reach the ears of the person to whom they were spoken. I was soon confirmed in this conjecture, when, upon the increase of the cold, the whole company grew dumb, or rather deaf; for every man was sensible, as we afterwards found, that he spoke as well as ever; but the sounds no sooner took air than they were condensed and lost. It was

now a miserable spectacle to see us nodding and gaping at one another, every man talking, and no man heard. One might observe a seaman, that could hail a ship at a league's distance, beckoning with his hand, straining his lungs, and tearing his throat, but all in vain.

—*Nec vox, nec verba, sequuntur.*

'We continued here three weeks in this dismal plight. At length, upon a turn of wind, the air about us began to thaw. Our cabin was immediately filled with a dry clattering sound, which I afterwards found to be the crackling of consonants that broke above our heads, and were often mixed with a gentle hissing, which I imputed to the letter S, that occurs so frequently in the English tongue. I soon after felt a breeze of whispers rushing by my ear; for those being of a soft and gentle substance, immediately liquefied in the warm wind that blew across our cabin. These were soon followed by syllables and short words, and at length by entire sentences, that melted sooner or later, as they were more or less congealed; so that we now heard everything that had been spoken during the whole three weeks that we had been silent, if I may use that expression. It was now very early in the morning, and yet, to my surprise, I heard somebody say, "Sir John, it is midnight, and time for the ship's crew to go to bed." This I knew to be the pilot's voice, and upon recollecting myself I concluded that he had spoken these words to me some days before, though I could not hear them before the present thaw. My reader will easily imagine how the whole crew was amazed to hear every man talking, and see no man opening his mouth. In the midst of this great surprise we were all in, we heard a volley of oaths and curses, lasting for a long while, and uttered in a very hoarse voice, which I knew belonged to the boatswain, who was a very choleric fellow, and had taken his opportunity of cursing and swearing at me when he thought I could not hear him; for I had several times given him the strappado on that account, as I did not fail to repeat it for these his pious soliloquies when I got him on shipboard.

'I must not omit the names of several beauties in Wapping, which were heard every now and then, in the midst of a long sigh that accompanied them; as, dear Kate! Pretty Mrs. Peggy When shall I see my Sue again? This betrayed several amours

which had been concealed till that time, and furnished us with a great deal of mirth in our return to England.

'When this confusion of voices was pretty well over, though I was afraid to offer at speaking, as fearing I should not be heard, I proposed a visit to the Dutch cabin, which lay about a mile further up in the country. My crew were extremely rejoiced to find they had again recovered their hearing, though every man uttered his voice with the same apprehensions that I had done: —*Et timide verba intermissa retenta.*

'At about half a mile's distance from our cabin we heard the groanings of a bear, which at first startled us; but upon inquiry we were informed by some of our company that he was dead, and now lay in salt, having been killed upon that very spot about a fortnight before in the time of the frost. Not far from the same place we were likewise entertained with some posthumous snarls and barkings of a fox.

'We at length arrived at the little Dutch settlement, and upon entering the room found it filled with sighs that smelt of brandy, and several other unsavoury sounds that were altogether inarticulate. My valet, who was an Irishman, fell into so great a rage at what he heard that he drew his sword; but not knowing where to lay the blame, he put it up again. We were stunned with these confused noises, but did not hear a single word till about half an hour after; which I ascribed to the harsh and obdurate sounds of that language, which wanted more time than ours to melt and become audible.

'After having here met with a very hearty welcome, we went to the cabin of the French, who, to make amends for their three weeks' silence, were talking and disputing with greater rapidity and confusion than ever I heard in an assembly even of that nation. Their language, as I found, upon the first giving of the weather, fell asunder and dissolved. I was here convinced of an error into which I had before fallen; for I fancied, that for the freezing of the sound it was necessary for it to be wrapped up, and, as it were, preserved in breath; but I found my mistake when I heard the sound of a kit playing a minuet over our heads. I asked the occasion of it; upon which one of the company told me that it would play there above a week longer if the thaw continued; "For," says he, "finding ourselves bereft of speech we prevailed upon one of the company, who had his musical

instrument about him, to play to us from morning to night; all which time we employed in dancing, in order to dissipate our chagrin, *et tuer le temps*.'"

Here Sir John gives very good philosophical reasons why the kit could be heard during the frost; but as they are something prolix, I pass over them in silence, and shall only observe that the honourable author seems, by his quotations, to have been well versed in the ancient poets, which perhaps raised his fancy above the ordinary pitch of historians, and very much contributed to the embellishment of his writings.

The Tatler, No. 254 — Thursday, November 23, 1710

ADDISON, 1672–1719

THE FAR NORTH

STILL pressing on, beyond Tornèa's lake,[1]
And Hecla flaming through a waste of snow,
And farthest Greenland, to the pole itself,
Where, failing gradual, life at length goes out,
The muse expands her solitary flight;
And, hovering o'er the wild stupendous scene,
Beholds new seas beneath another sky.
Throned in his palace of cerulean ice,
Here Winter holds his unrejoicing court;
And through his airy hall the loud misrule
Of driving tempest is for ever heard:
Here the grim tyrant meditates his wrath;
Here arms his winds with all-subduing frost;
Moulds his fierce hail, and treasures up his snows,
With which he now oppresses half the globe.
Thence winding eastward to the Tartar's coast,
She sweeps the howling margin of the main;
Where undissolving, from the first of time,
Snows swell on snows amazing to the sky—
And icy mountains high on mountains piled
Seem to the shivering sailor from afar,
Shapeless and white, an atmosphere of clouds.
Projected huge, and horrid, o'er the surge,

[1]In Finland.

Alps frown on Alps; or rushing hideous down,
As if old chaos was again returned,
Wide-rend the deep, and shake the solid pole.
Ocean itself no longer can resist
The binding fury; but, in all its rage
Of tempest taken by the boundless frost,
Is many a fathom to the bottom chained,
And bid to roar no more: a bleak expanse,
Shagged o'er with wavy rocks, cheerless, and void
Of every life, that from the dreary months
Flies conscious southward. Miserable they!
Who, here entangled in the gathering ice,
Take their last look of the descending sun;
While, full of death, and fierce with tenfold frost,
The long, long night, incumbent o'er their heads,
Falls horrible. Such was the Briton's[1] fate,
As with first prow, (what have not Britons dared!)
He for the passage sought, attempted since
So much in vain, and seeming to be shut
By jealous Nature with eternal bars.
In these fell regions, in Arzina caught,
And to the stony deep his idle ship
Immediate sealed, he with his hapless crew,
Each full exerted at his several task,
Froze into statues; to the cordage glued
The sailor, and the pilot to the helm.

Winter
THOMSON

THE MOLLYS

So the mollys took Tom up on their backs, and flew off with him, laughing and joking—and oh, how they did smell of train oil!

'Who are you, you jolly birds?' asked Tom.

'We are the spirits of the old Greenland skippers (as every sailor knows), who hunted here, right whales and horse-whales, full hundreds of years agone. But, because we were saucy and greedy, we were all turned into mollys, to eat whale's blubber all our days. But lubbers we are none, and could sail a ship now against any man in the North Seas, though we don't hold with

[1]Sir Hugh Willoughby, 1553.

this new-fangled steam. And it's a shame of those black imps of petrels to call us so; but because they're her grace's pets, they think they may say anything they like.'

'And who are you?' asked Tom of him, for he saw that he was the king of all the birds.

'My name is Hendrick Hudson, and a right good skipper was I; and my name will last to the world's end, in spite of all the wrong I did. For I discovered Hudson River, and I named Hudson's Bay; and many have come in my wake that dared not have shown me the way. But I was a hard man in my time, that's truth, and stole the poor Indians off the coast of Maine, and sold them for slaves down in Virginia; and at last I was so cruel to my sailors, here in these very seas, that they set me adrift in an open boat, and I never was heard of more. So now I'm the king of all the mollys, till I've worked out my time.'

And now they came to the edge of the pack, and beyond it they could see Shiny Wall looming, through mist, and snow, and storm. But the pack rolled horribly upon the swell, and the ice giants fought and roared, and leapt upon each other's backs, and ground each other to powder, so that Tom was afraid to venture among them, lest he should be ground to powder too. And he was the more afraid, when he saw lying among the ice pack the wrecks of many a gallant ship; some with masts and yards all standing, some with the seamen frozen fast on board. Alas, alas, for them! They were all true English hearts; and they came to their end like good knights-errant, in searching for the white gate that never was opened yet.

The Water-Babies
CHARLES KINGSLEY, 1819–1875

SONG OF THE OLD LOVE

WHEN sparrows build, and the leaves break forth
My old sorrow wakes and cries,
For I know there is dawn in the far, far north,
And a scarlet sun doth rise;
Like a scarlet fleece the snow-field spreads,
And the icy founts run free.
And the bergs begin to bow their heads,
And plunge, and sail in the sea.

O my lost love, and my own, own love,
  And my love that loved me so!
Is there never a chink in the world above
  Where they listen from worlds below?
Nay, I spoke once, and I grieved thee sore,
  I remember all that I said,
And now thou will hear me—no more, no more,
  Till the sea gives up her dead.

Thou didst set thy foot in the ship and sail
  To the ice-fields and the snow;
Thou were sad, for thy love did nought avail,
  And the end I could not know;
How could I tell I should love thee to-day
  When that day I held not dear?
How could I know I should love thee away
  When I did not love thee anear?

We shall walk no more through the sodden plain
  With the faded bents o'er-spread,
We shall stand no more by the seething main
  While the dark wrack drives o'erhead;
We shall part no more in the wind and the rain,
  Where thy last farewell was said:
But perhaps I shall meet and know thee again
  When the sea gives up her dead.

J. INGELOW, 1830–1897

THE GREAT COLD AT CHRISTMAS

FOR a moment he despaired. The thought of death, and a death from cold, appeared in all its horror. This last morsel of coal burned with an ominous glow; the fire seemed about to go out and the temperature of the room fell sensibly. But Johnson went and brought some bits of that new fuel which the marine animals had supplied, and thrust it into the stove; he also added some tow impregnated with frozen oil, and soon obtained sufficient warmth. The smell of this burning grease was insupportable; but how could it be avoided? They were obliged to put up

with it. Johnson himself agreed his expedient might be improved, and would hardly be tolerated in a Liverpool house.

'And yet,' said he, 'this disgusting smell may be of some use to us.'

'How?' asked the carpenter.

'By attracting the bears in this direction, for they are very fond of these smells.'

'Good! but what do we want with the bears?'

'Friend Bell,' replied Johnson, 'we can no longer reckon on the seals; they have disappeared, and for some time. If the bears do not come and supply us with fuel in their turn, I don't know what will become of us.'

'True, Johnson, our fate is by no means certain; this is a frightful situation, and if this sort of fuel should ever fail us, I can hardly see any means——'

'There is but one!'

'Is there one?' replied Bell.

'Yes, Bell, and a desperate one. But the captain would never —and yet he must come to it at last!'

Old Johnson shook his head and fell into a reverie, from which Bell did not attempt to draw him. He knew these bits of frozen blubber, obtained with so much trouble, would not last a week, notwithstanding the strictest economy.

The boatswain was not wrong. Several bears, attracted by the horrid smell, were signalled to leeward of the *Forward*; the most robust of the crew went in pursuit of them; but these animals are remarkably quick and cunning, and it was impossible to get near them, and they were unable to hit one.

The brig's crew were seriously threatened with death from cold; it was impossible to resist such a temperature for forty-eight hours. Every man saw the end of the last morsel of fuel with terror.

Now, that happened the 20th of December, at three in the afternoon; the fire went out; the seamen, crouched round the stove, looked at one another with haggard eyes. Hatteras remained motionless in one corner, while the doctor walked impatiently up and down the room. He was at his wits' end.

The temperature in the common room suddenly fell to seven degrees below zero.

But if the doctor's imagination failed him, if he no longer knew what to do, the others knew for him. So Shandon, cold and

resolute, Pen with anger in his eyes, and two or three of their comrades who could still crawl about, went up to Hatteras.

'Captain,' said Shandon.

Hatteras, absorbed in thought, did not hear him.

'Captain,' said Shandon, touching his hand.

Hatteras started up.

'Sir,' said he.

'Captain, we have no fire!'

'Well,' said Hatteras.

'We should be glad to know if it is your intention that we should die of cold!' replied Shandon, with fearful irony.

'My intention,' replied Hatteras, gravely, 'is that every man should do his duty to the end!'

'There is something above duty, captain,' replied the second officer; 'it's the law of self-preservation. I repeat, we have no fire, and if that continues, in two days there will not be a man of us left alive!'

'I have no wood to give you,' replied Hatteras, gloomily.

'Well, then,' cried Pen, with violence, 'when there is no more wood, we must go and cut it where it grows.'

Hatteras grew pale with anger.

'Where is that!' said he.

'On board!' insolently replied the sailor.

'On board!' cried the captain, clenching his fists.

'Of course!' replied Pen; 'when the ship is of no use to the men, why not burn the ship?'

At the beginning of Pen's speech Hatteras had seized a hatchet. At the end of it the hatchet was put above Pen's head.

'Scoundrel!' cried he.

The doctor threw himself before Pen whom he thrust back, the axe falling on the ground made a deep cut in the flooring. Johnson, Bell, and Simpson, grouped round Hatteras, seemed determined to support him. Meanwhile the most lamentable and plaintive tones issued from those sleeping bunks transformed into death-beds.

'Fire! fire!' cried these unfortunate patients, invaded by cold under their blankets.

Hatteras made an effort, and after a few moments, said—

'If we destroy our vessel how are we to return to England?'

'Sir,' said Johnson, 'we might be able to burn some of the less important part, the rail, for instance.'

'The boats are always there, and what is there to prevent us from building a smaller vessel out of the wreck of the old one?'

'Never!' replied Hatteras.

'But!' cried several sailors, raising their voices.

'We have a large quantity of spirits of wine; burn that to the last drop.'

'Here goes for the spirits of wine!' cried Johnson, affecting a confidence he was far from feeling, and, with the help of large wicks steeped in spirits he was able to raise the common room's temperature somewhat.

For a few days after this scene of despair the wind returned to the south, the thermometer rose; the snow fell in whirlwinds, while the temperature was less severe.

A few of the men were able to leave the ship during the driest hours of the day, but ophthalmia and scurvy kept the greater number of them on board; besides, they could neither hunt nor fish.

After all, this was but a respite from the frightful cold, and the 25th, after an unexpected change of wind, the frozen mercury disappeared again in the bowl. They were therefore obliged to have recourse to the spirits of wine thermometer, which the greatest cold is unable to freeze.

The doctor, to his horror, found it at sixty-six degrees below zero. It has hardly ever been given to man to support such a temperature.

The ice lay like long mirrors on the floor, the room was filled with a thick fog, the damp fell like snow; they could hardly see one another, the heat of the body deserted the extremities, their hands and feet were blue, their heads seemed bound with a circlet of iron, and their minds were in a state bordering on delirium. One fearful symptom was that their tongues could no longer articulate a word.

From the day they had proposed to burn his ship, Hatteras wandered about the deck for hours together; he watched her, and stood sentry over her. That wood was as dear as his own flesh; it was cutting off a limb of himself when they cut a splinter from her. He was armed, and kept good watch, insensible to cold, to snow, to the ice, which stiffened his clothes, and enveloped him as in a granite cuirass. Duke seemed to understand him, and accompanied his master's steps with his own howls.

On the 25th of December, however, he went down into the common room. The doctor, taking advantage of some remains of energy, went straight up to him.

'Hatteras,' said he, 'we are dying from want of fire——'

'Never!' interrupted Hatteras, well knowing what was coming.

'You must,' gently replied the doctor.

'No, never!' returned Hatteras, more forcibly than ever; 'I will never consent to it, they may disobey me if they will.'

This was as good as liberty to act. Johnson and Bell rushed up deck. Hatteras could hear the woodwork of his brig crack under the axe. He burst into tears.

That day was Christmas-day, the family *fête* day in England. What bitter recollections of joyous children round their Christmas-tree; and the roast beef, and the mince-pies; while here, grief, despair, and misery, in its last stage, and the yule log is a block of wood from a ship lost in the deepest part of the frozen zone!

Under the influence of the fire, strength and feeling returned to the hearts of the sailors. Boiling hot tea and coffee produced an instantaneous relief, and so tenacious is the human mind of hope, that they began to hope again. It was thus that the fatal year of 1860 was ended, the early winter of which had so deranged the bold plans of Hatteras.

Now it happened that, January 1st, 1861, precisely, was marked by an unexpected discovery. It was rather less cold; the doctor had resumed his usual studies, he was reading Sir Edward Belcher's account of his expedition to the Polar Seas. All at once a passage which he had not noticed before struck him with astonishment. He read it over again. There could be no mistake about it.

Sir Edward Belcher was relating that, after having arrived at the extreme end of the Queen's Channel, he had discovered unmistakeable traces of men having passed there.

'There are,' said he, 'the remains of dwellings very superior to what could be attributed to the coarser habits of wandering tribes of Esquimaux. The walls are built on good solid foundations. The floor of the interior has been covered with a thick layer of gravel, and has been paved. Bones of reindeer, sea-horses, and seals, lay about in great quantity. We found coal there.'

At these last words an idea came into the doctor's head. He

took his book with him, and went and communicated his idea to Hatteras.

'Coal!' cried the latter.

'Yes, Hatteras, coal; that is safety for us all.'

'Coal on this desert coast? No, it is not possible.'

'Why doubt it, Hatteras? Belcher would not have stated this as a fact if it was not so, if he had not seen it with his own eyes. Besides, we are not a hundred miles from the coast where Belcher saw this coal! What is an excursion of a hundred miles? Nothing. Longer excursions have been made across the ice in a cold equal to this. Let us go, captain.'

'Let us go,' repeated Hatteras, whose active imagination made him already perceive a chance of rescue.

Johnson was also told of this determination; he heartily approved of the plan, and communicated it to his comrades. Some praised it, others received it with indifference.

'Coal on these coasts!' said Wall, from his bed of sickness.

'Let them go,' said Shandon, mysteriously.

But before the preparations for the journey were begun, Hatteras wished to ascertain exactly the *Forward's* position. The importance of this calculation may easily be understood, and why her situation ought to be ascertained mathematically. Once at some distance from the vessel, they could not find her again without being exactly correct in his calculations.

Hatteras went on deck and took several lunar distances and meridian heights of the principal stars, at different moments.

These observations offered considerable difficulty, for, at this low temperature, the glass and reflectors of the instruments were covered with a layer of ice from his breath, and more than once his eyebrows were burnt by coming in contact with the brass rims of the glasses.

He was, however, able to obtain very exact traces for his calculations, and he returned to the common room to reduce them to figures. When he had finished his work he raised his head in stupid astonishment, took his chart, marked it, and passed it to the doctor.

'Well?' asked the latter.

'In what latitude were we at the beginning of our wintering?'

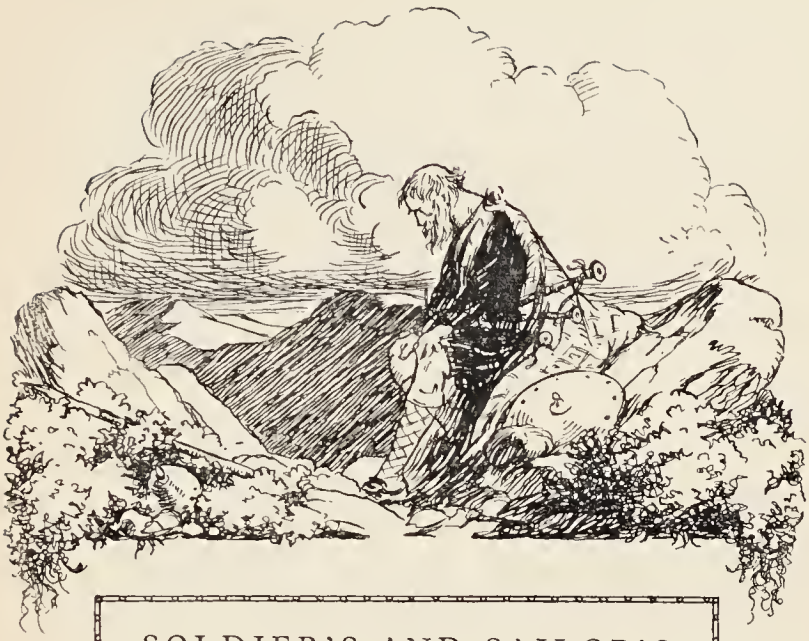
'Why, in seventy-eight degrees fifteen minutes latitude, and ninety-five degrees thirty-five minutes longitude, precisely at the frozen pole.'

'Well then,' whispered Hatteras, 'our ice field is drifting; we are two degrees more to the north, and more towards the west, and three hundred miles at least from your coal depot.'

'And these poor fellows know nothing about it,' said the doctor.

'Not a word,' said Hatteras, significantly putting his finger to his lips.

Captain Hatteras, or The English at the North Pole
JULES VERNE, 1828–1905



SOLDIER'S AND SAILOR'S WINTER

SOLDIER'S WINTER

Alpenglow
Upon the Scottish hills, changing the snow
with one great brush-stroke to an arras woven
of the moss-roses from the sills of heaven.

And soon, how soon,
On swan-wings drifting down a slender moon
will watch—a heavenly Midas—in bright alarm
a world all silver in her silver arm.

So night to dawn
offers, defeated, his last sable pawn,
while she with the flushed gambit of the sun
sweeps the great board and mates his king in one.

Or when the mist
strangles the valleys with his naked fist
and the sorrow for all things wasted beneath the sky
is gathered in a single curlew's cry,

Then, oh then,
deep in the heart for all the mountain-men
for all that broken jetsam of the war
the pipes play Lochaber no more.

Spring is not spring, nor summer summer
when the snow-flake sorrows eddy and clamour,
cold as the stone in the farthest scaur,
and wild with 'Lochaber no more,
Lochaber, Lochaber, Lochaber no more.'

There is no sun now nor any moon,
but out of the mist a ghostly tune
not on the high and hunting air
of the Northern wind, but everywhere,
that love remembers and (clearer yet)
when the loves forgotten themselves forget!

'For the body no haven, the heart no harbour
and over the screaming tides of war
the pipes play Lochaber, the pipes play Lochaber,
the pipes play Lochaber, Lochaber no more.'

SOLDIER'S AND SAILOR'S WINTER

Retreats and Escapes

		PAGE
The Retreat of the 10,000	*Xenophon*	137
The Retreat of the Grand Army	*Memoirs of Borgogne.*	
Horrors of Famine	Translated *by the*	139
The Widow and her Daughters	*Hon. J. W. For-*	140
An Act of Devotion	*tescue*	141
Death Music	1812–1813	142
French Army in Russia	*William Wordsworth* 1770–1850	144
L'Expiation	*Victor Hugo* 1802–1885	145
Le Chasseur Noir	*Victor Hugo*	147
The Long Rout of the Grand Army	*Joseph Conrad* 1857–1924	149
Galvanized Corpses	*Joseph Conrad*	149
Escape from Siberian Prison	*Rufin Pietrowski*	150
The Storme	*John Donne* 1573–1631	151
The Storm	*Statius.* Translated by *A. Pope* 1688–1744	152
Deucalion's Deluge	*New Miscellany* 1720	154
The Ancient Mariner	*S. T. Coleridge* 1772–1834	155
Frost at Midnight	*S. T. Coleridge*	156
Coleridge to his Child	*S. T. Coleridge*	157
In the Gulf of Lyons	*Byron* 1788–1824	157

Battles

Incident of the Spanish Wars	*Motley* 1814–1877	160
Le Cœur d'Hialmar	*Leconte de Lisle* 1818–1894	160
December 1740	*Thomas Carlyle* 1795–1881	162
Marlborough the Milksop	*Horace Walpole* 1717–1797	163
Christmas at Sea	*R. L. Stevenson* 1850–1894	163

SOLDIER'S AND SAILOR'S WINTER

RETREATS AND ESCAPES

THE RETREAT OF THE 10,000

[The Greeks march through an uninhabited tract of country, suffering greatly from cold winds, snow, and want of provisions. At length they reach some well-stored villages, where they rest seven days.]

THE next day it was thought necessary to march away as fast as possible, before the enemy's force should be reassembled, and get possession of the pass. Collecting their baggage at once, therefore, they set forward through a deep snow, taking with them several guides; and, having the same day passed the height on which Tiribazus had intended to attack them, they encamped. Hence they proceeded three days' journey through a desert tract of country, a distance of fifteen parasangs, to the river Euphrates, and passed it without being wet higher than the middle. The sources of the river were said not to be far off. From hence they advanced three days' march, through much snow and a level plain, a distance of fifteen parasangs; the third day's march was extremely troublesome, as the north-wind blew full in their faces, completely parching up everything and benumbing the men. One of the augurs, in consequence, advised that they should sacrifice to the wind; and a sacrifice was accordingly offered; when the vehemence of the wind appeared to every one manifestly to abate. The depth of the snow was a fathom; so that many of the baggage-cattle and slaves perished, with about

thirty of the soldiers. They continued to burn fires through the whole night, for there was plenty of wood at the place of encampment. But those who came up late could get no wood; those therefore who had arrived before, and had kindled fires, would not admit the late comers to the fire unless they gave them a share of the corn or other provisions that they had brought. Thus they shared with each other what they respectively had. In the places where the fires were made, as the snow melted, there were formed large pits that reached down to the ground; and here there was accordingly opportunity to measure the depth of the snow.

From hence they marched through snow the whole of the following day, and many of the men contracted the *bulimia*. Xenophon, who commanded in the rear, finding in his way such of these men as had fallen down with it, knew not what disease it was. But as one of those acquainted with it, told him that they were evidently affected with *bulimia*, and that they would get up if they had something to eat, he went round among the baggage, and, wherever he saw anything eatable, he gave it out, and sent such as were able to run to distribute it among those diseased, who, as soon as they had eaten, rose up and continued their march. As they proceeded, Cheirisophus came, just as it grew dark, to a village, and found, at a spring in front of the rampart, some women and girls belonging to the place fetching water. The women asked them who they were; and the interpreter answered, in the Persian language, that they were people going from the king to the satrap. They replied that he was not there, but about a parasang off. However, as it was late, they went with the water-carriers within the rampart, to the head man of the village; and here Cheirisophus, and as many of the troops as could come up, encamped; but of the rest, such as were unable to get to the end of the journey, spent the night on the way without food or fire; and some of the soldiers lost their lives on that occasion. Some of the enemy too, who had collected themselves into a body, pursued our rear, and seized any of the baggage-cattle that were unable to proceed, fighting with one another for the possession of them. Such of the soldiers, also, as had lost their sight from the effects of the snow, or had had their toes mortified by the cold, were left behind. It was found to be a relief to the eyes against the snow, if the soldiers kept something black before them on the march, and to the feet, if they kept

constantly in motion, and allowed themselves no rest, and if they took off their shoes in the night; but as to such as slept with their shoes on, the straps worked into their feet, and the soles were frozen about them; for when their old shoes had failed them, shoes of raw hides had been made by the men themselves from the newly-skinned oxen. From such unavoidable sufferings, some of the soldiers were left behind, who, seeing a piece of ground of a black appearance, from the snow having disappeared there, conjectured that it must have melted; and it had in fact melted in the spot from the effect of a fountain, which was sending up vapour in a woody hollow close at hand. Turning aside thither, they sat down and refused to proceed further. Xenophon, who was with the rear-guard, as soon as he heard this, tried to prevail on them by every art and means not to be left behind, telling them, at the same time, that the enemy were collected, and pursuing them in great numbers. At last he grew angry; and they told him to kill them, as they were quite unable to go forward. He then thought it the best course to strike a terror, if possible, into the enemy that were behind, lest they should fall upon the exhausted soldiers. It was now dark, and the enemy were advancing with a great noise, quarrelling about the booty they had taken; when such of the rear-guard as were not disabled, started up, and rushed towards them, while the tired men, shouting as loud as they could, clashed their spears against their shields. The enemy, struck with alarm, threw themselves among the snow into the hollow, and no one of them afterwards made themselves heard from any quarter.

XENOPHON

NAPOLEON'S 'COLD HELL'—RETREAT FROM MOSCOW HORRORS OF FAMINE[1]

BEFORE the dawn, I set out with my companion to rejoin the regiment. We walked on, thinking of all that had passed, stumbling over dead and dying men. The cold was even more intense than on the day before. We joined two men of the line who had their teeth in a bit of horse-flesh. They said, if they

[1] *Memoirs of Serjeant Bourgogne*. Authorised Translation by the Hon. J. W. Fortescue.

waited any longer, it would be frozen too hard to eat. They assured us as a fact that they had seen foreign soldiers (Croats) of our army dragging corpses out of the fire, cutting them up and eating them. I never saw this sort of thing myself, but I believe it frequently happened during this fatal campaign.

What object could those men have, almost dying as they were, in telling us this story, if it were not true? It was not an occasion for lying. I am sure that if I had not found any horse-flesh myself I could have turned cannibal. To understand the situation, one must have felt the madness of hunger; failing a man to eat, one could have demolished the devil himself, if he were only cooked.

Authorised Translation by the
HON. J. W. FORTESCUE

THE WIDOW AND HER DAUGHTERS

SINCE we left Moscow, a pretty Russian carriage drawn by four horses had followed the Guards column. For the last two days, however, we only saw two; the others had either been killed and eaten, or had died of the cold and fatigue. In the carriage was a lady, probably a widow, still young, with her two daughters, of seventeen and fifteen years of age. They were from Moscow, of French origin, and had yielded to the entreaties of one of our superior officers to accompany him to France. Perhaps the officer intended to marry the lady, for he was no longer very young. Be that as it may, these unhappy ladies were, like us, exposed to the terrible cold, and to all the miseries of hunger and want, feeling it, no doubt, far more keenly than we did.

The day was breaking when we got to the place where our regiment had slept, and the army was already in motion. During the last two days the regiments were diminished by a third of their number, and it was only too evident, from the slow, painful progress of many of the men, that they would succumb before the day was over. I saw the carriage containing the unfortunate ladies emerge from a little wood on to the high-road; there it stopped close to me, and I heard cries and groans proceeding from it. The officer in charge of the ladies opened the door, got into the carriage, and presently lifted out a dead body to the sappers waiting outside. One of the poor girls had just died. She

was dressed in grey silk, with a cape of the same colour trimmed with ermine. She was still beautiful but very thin. We were all very much touched by this sight, in spite of our usual indifference to tragic scenes, and when I saw the officer in tears, I wept also.

As the sappers took the girl's body away, I glanced into the carriage, and there I saw the mother and the other girl fallen one over the other. They seemed to be quite unconscious, and, indeed, their sufferings were ended that evening. I think they were all three buried by the sappers in the same grave, near Valoutina. The Lieutenant-Colonel, reproaching himself for this misfortune, tried at Krasnoë and other battles to meet his death; and in January, a few days after our arrival at Elbingen, he died of grief.

Idem

AN ACT OF DEVOTION

. . . We were roused by an extraordinary noise. This was the north wind travelling over the forests, bringing with it heavy snow and twenty-seven degrees of frost, so that it became quite impossible for the men to stay where they had camped. We heard them shouting as they ran about towards any fire they saw; but the heavy snow-storms caught them, and they could soon run no more, or if they tried to do so, they fell and never rose again. In this way many hundreds perished, and thousands died of those who had stayed where they were camped. . . .

I must relate an act of devotion called forth by this disastrous night, when all the powers of hell seemed to be turned loose on us.

The Prince Emile of Hesse-Cassel was with us, and his contingent, composed of several regiments of cavalry and infantry. Like us, he bivouacked on the left side of the road, with the remainder of his unfortunate men, now reduced to five or six hundred. About a hundred and fifty dragoons were left; but these were almost all on foot, their horses being dead and eaten. These brave men, almost frozen with the cold, sacrificed themselves in this awful night to save their young Prince, not more than twenty years of age. They stood round him the whole night wrapped in their great white cloaks, pressed tightly one against the other, protecting him from the wind and cold. The next morning three quarters of them were dead and buried beneath the snow, along with ten thousand others from different corps.

Idem

DEATH MUSIC

It was so fearfully dark that I lost all idea of direction, and I was obliged to sit down on a gun-carriage to rest, and try to think which way I ought to take.

In this dreadful predicament, as I sat with my head buried in my hands, I was dropping off into a sleep from which I should not have awakened, when I heard some extraordinary sounds. I got up, terrified to think of the danger I had just escaped. So I think this must have been dreaming, or perhaps it was a warning from Heaven to save me. So taking fresh courage I began to walk again. . . .

At last I left all the obstacles behind me, after nearly breaking my leg several times, and I rested a moment to take breath and get strength enough to climb a hill in front of me. Then I heard the same sounds which had awakened me before, but this time I recognised them for music. I heard the slow, prolonged notes of an organ some distance off; they produced an indescribable impression on me, alone as I was at such a place, and at such an hour. . . . Slowly and cautiously I advanced, holding my head well up, my ears open for any sound, and at last I made up my mind that the music had been an hallucination. In our present dreadful circumstances, how could such music have been possible —and above all at such an hour?

Reflecting as I walked, my right foot, which already was half-frozen, struck against something hard. I cried out with the pain, and fell over a dead body, its face touching mine, then raised myself with difficulty, and saw that it was the body of a dragoon, his helmet still strapped on. . . .

My cry of pain was heard by a man on my right. . . . I went in the direction of the voice. . . . I seemed to recognise it and at last I cried,

'Is it you, Bélogue?'

'Yes,' he called back. He was as much surprised as I at our meeting at this time of night, and in such a desolate spot, and knowing no more than I did where we were. . . . I told him that I had been lost, but I dared not say anything of the music I had heard, fearing he should say I was out of my mind. . . . The aerial music began again, but this time much nearer. I called Bélogue's attention to it, and told him of the strange things which

had happened to me when I heard the sounds before. And then he said that at intervals he had heard the music too, and could not make it out. Sometimes it made an infernal racket, and if men were amusing themselves in that way, they must have the devil inside them. Then, coming closer to me, he said in a low voice:

'My friend, these sounds are very like death-music. Death is all round us; and I have a presentiment that in a few days I shall be dead too.' Then he added, 'May God's will be done! But the suffering seems too great.'

I said nothing, for I thought just as he did. Suddenly my companion said: 'To my mind, the sounds seem to come from above.'

As he said so, the sounds did certainly seem to come from just over our heads. All at once the noise ceased, and an awful silence followed, broken only by a mournful cry—the last breath of one of our men.

It was now past one o'clock; the wind had dropped. . . . I had not been alone a minute, when the cursed music started again. I stopped, and, raising my head to listen better, I saw a light in front of me . . . and found myself in a street of ruined houses. I strode on quickly, still guided by the music. At the end of the street there was a building lighted up from which the sounds evidently came. As I stumbled along, picking my way among the legs and arms of the bodies, a melancholy chaunt arose—like the Office for the Dead. Bélogue's words came back to me, and I broke out into a cold sweat. . . . I came to myself a bit, in spite of the diabolical noise . . . at length finding an open door through which came a thick smoke. I went in, and saw a great number of people, who in the dense smoke, looked like shadows. Some of them were singing, and others playing on the organ. All at once a great flame burst forth and the smoke disappeared. I looked round to see where I was; one of the singers cried out: 'It's our sergeant.' He had recognised my bearskin, and I saw, to my immense surprise, all the men of my company! I was on the point of questioning them, when one of them offered me a silver cup full of brandy. They were all fearfully drunk. One rather less drunk than the others, said . . . that they had seen two men with a lantern coming out of a cellar; that they had banded themselves together to go there . . . to see if they could find something to eat, and then spend the night in this church. In the cellar they had found a small cask of brandy, a bag of rice,

and a little biscuit. . . . With the men of the company were several musicians of the regiment, who had started playing the organ—being half-seas over, as they say. This explained the harmony which had puzzled me so much.

Idem

FRENCH ARMY IN RUSSIA, 1812–13

(Composed Feb. 1816—published: vol. of 1816)

HUMANITY, delighting to behold
A fond reflection of her own decay,
Hath painted Winter like a traveller old,
Propped on a staff, and, through the sullen day,
In hooded mantle, limping o'er the plain,
As though his weakness were disturbed by pain;
Or, if a juster fancy should allow
An undisputed symbol of command,
The chosen sceptre is a withered bough,
Infirmly grasped within a palsied hand.
These emblems suit the helpless and forlorn,
But mighty Winter the device shall scorn.

For he it was—dread Winter! who beset,
Flinging round van and rear his ghastly net,
That host, when from the regions of the Pole
They shrunk, insane ambition's barren goal—
That host, as huge and strong as e'er defied
Their God, and placed their trust in human pride!
As fathers persecute rebellious sons,
He smote the blossoms of their warrior youth;
He called on Frost's inexorable tooth
Life to consume in Manhood's firmest hold;
Nor spared the reverend blood that feebly runs;
For why—unless for liberty enrolled
And sacred home—ah! why should hoary Age be bold?
Fleet the Tartar's reinless steed,
But fleeter far the pinions of the Wind,
Which from Siberian caves the Monarch freed,
And sent him forth, with squadrons of his kind,
And bade the Snow their ample backs bestride,
And to the battle ride.

No pitying voice commands a halt,
No courage can repel the dire assault;
Distracted, spiritless, benumbed, and blind,
Whole legions sink—and, in one instant, find
Burial and death: look for them—and descry,
When morn returns, beneath the clear blue sky,
A soundless waste, a trackless vacancy!

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770–1850

L'EXPIATION

Il neigeait. On était vaincu par sa conquête.
Pour la première fois l'aigle baissait la tête.
Sombres jours! l'empereur revenait lentement,
Laissant derrière lui brûler Moscou fumant.
Il neigeait. L'âpre hiver fondait en avalanche.
Après la plaine blanche une autre plaine blanche.
On ne connaissait plus les chefs ni le drapeau.
Hier la grande armée, et maintenant troupeau.
On ne distinguait plus les ailes ni le centre.
Il neigeait. Les blessés s'abritaient dans le ventre
Des chevaux morts; au seuil des bivouacs désolés
On voyait des clairons à leur poste gelés,
Restés debout, en selle et muets, blancs de givre,
Collant leur bouche en pierre aux trompettes de cuivre.
Boulets, mitraille, obus, mêlés aux flocons blancs,
Pleuvaient; les grenadiers, surpris d'être tremblants,
Marchaient pensifs, la glace à leur moustache grise.
Il neigeait, il neigeait toujours! La froide bise
Sifflait; sur le verglas, dans des lieux inconnus,
On n'avait pas de pain et l'on allait pieds nus.
Ce n'étaient plus des cœurs vivants, des gens de guerre,
C'était un rêve errant dans la brume, un mystère,
Une procession d'ombres sur le ciel noir.
La solitude, vaste, épouvantable à voir,
Partout apparaissait, muette vengeresse.
Le ciel faisait sans bruit avec la neige épaisse
Pour cette immense armée un immense linceul;
Et, chacun se sentant mourir, on était seul.

—Sortira-t-on jamais de ce funeste empire?
Deux ennemis! le czar, le nord. Le nord est pire.
On jetait les canons pour brûler les affûts.
Qui se couchait, mourait. Groupe morne et confus,
Ils fuyaient; le désert dévorait le cortège.
On pouvait, à des plis qui soulevaient la neige,
Voir que des régiments s'étaient endormis là.
O chutes d'Annibal! lendemains d'Attila!
Fuyards, blessés, mourants, caissons, brancards, civières,
On s'écrasait aux ponts pour passer les rivières,
On s'endormait dix mille, on se réveillait cent.
Ney, que suivait naguère une armée, à présent
S'évadait, disputant sa montre à trois cosaques.
Toutes les nuits, qui-vive! alerte! assauts! attaques!
Ces fantômes prenaient leur fusil, et sur eux
Ils voyaient se ruer, effrayants, ténébreux,
Avec des cris pareils aux voix des vautours chauves,
D'horribles escadrons, tourbillons d'hommes fauves,
Toute une armée ainsi dans la nuit se perdait.
L'empereur était là, debout, qui regardait.
Il était comme un arbre en proie à la cognée.
Sur ce géant, grandeur jusqu'alors épargnée,
Le malheur, bûcheron sinistre, était monté;
Et lui, chêne vivant, par la hache insulté,
Tressaillant sous le spectre aux lugubres revanches,
Il regardait tomber autour de lui ses branches.
Chefs, soldats, tous mouraient. Chacun avait son tour.
Tandis qu'environnant sa tente avec amour,
Voyant son ombre aller et venir sur la toile,
Ceux qui restaient, croyant toujours à son étoile,
Accusaient le destin de lèse-majesté,
Lui se sentit soudain dans l'âme épouvanté.
Stupéfait du désastre et ne sachant que croire,
L'empereur se tourna vers Dieu; l'homme de gloire
Trembla; Napoléon comprit qu'il expiait
Quelque chose peut-être, et, livide, inquiet,
Devant ses légions sur la neige semées:
— Est-ce le châtiment, dit-il, Dieu des armées? —
Alors il s'entendit appeler par son nom
Et quelqu'un qui parlait dans l'ombre lui dit: Non.

VICTOR HUGO, 1802–1885

LE CHASSEUR NOIR

— Qu'es-tu, passant? Le bois est sombre,
Les corbeaux volent en grand nombre,
Il va pleuvoir.
— Je suis celui qui va dans l'ombre,
Le chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois, du vent remuées,
Sifflent . . . on dirait
Qu'un sabbat nocturne emplit de huées
Toute la forêt;
Dans une clairière au sein des nuées
La lune apparaît.

Chasse le daim! chasse la biche,
Cours dans les bois, cours dans la friche,
Voici le soir.
Chasse le czar, chasse l'Autriche,
O chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois —

Souffle en ton cor, bouche ta guêtre,
Chasse les cerfs qui viennent paître
Près du manoir.
Chasse le roi, chasse le prêtre,
O chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois —

Il tonne, il pleut, c'est le déluge.
Le renard fuit, pas de refuge
Et pas d'espoir!
Chasse l'espion, chasse le juge,
O chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois —

Tous les démons de Saint-Antoine
Bondissent dans la folle avoine
Sans t'émouvoir;
Chasse l'abbé, chasse le moine,
O chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois —

Chasse les ours! ta meute jappe.
Que pas un sanglier n'échappe.
Fais ton devoir!
Chasse César, chasse le pape,
O chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois —

Le loup de ton sentier s'écarte.
Que ta meute à sa suite parte!
Cours! fais-le choir!
Chasse le brigand Bonaparte,
O chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois, du vent remuées,
Tombent . . . on dirait
Que le sabbat sombre aux rauques huées
A fui la forêt;
Le clair chant du coq perce les nuées;
Ciel! l'aube apparaît!

Tout reprend sa force première.
Tu redeviens la France altière
Si belle à voir,
L'ange blanc vêtu de lumière,
O chasseur noir!

Les feuilles des bois, du vent remuées,
Tombent . . . on dirait
Que le sabbat sombre aux rauques huées
A fui la forêt;
Le clair chant du coq perce les nuées;
Ciel! l'aube apparaît!

Idem

THE LONG ROUT OF THE GRAND ARMY[1]

THEN began the long rout of the Grand Army. I have seen it stream on, like the doomed flight of haggard, spectral sinners across the innermost frozen circle of Dante's Inferno ever widening before their despairing eyes.

They who escaped must have had their souls doubly riveted inside their bodies to carry them out of Russia through that frost fit to split rocks. But to say that it was our fault that a single one of them got away is mere ignorance. Why! Our own men suffered nearly to the limit of their strength. Their Russian strength!

Of course our spirit was not broken; and then our cause was good—it was holy. But that did not temper the wind much to men and horses.

The flesh is weak. Good or evil purpose, Humanity has to pay the price. Why! In that very fight for that little village of which I have been telling you we were fighting for the shelter of those old houses as much as victory. And with the French it was the same.

It wasn't for the sake of glory, or for the sake of strategy. The French knew that they would have to retreat before morning and we knew perfectly well that they would go. As far as the war was concerned there was nothing to fight about. Yet our infantry and theirs fought like wild cats, or like heroes if you like that better, amongst the houses—hot work enough—while the supports out in the open stood freezing in a tempestuous north wind which drove the snow on earth and the great masses of clouds in the sky at a terrific pace. The very air was inexpressibly sombre by contrast with the white earth. I have never seen God's creation look more sinister than on that day.

JOSEPH CONRAD, 1857–1924

GALVANIZED CORPSES

THIS was the first occasion then that I and my comrades had a close view of Napoleon's Grand Army. It was an amazing and terrible sight. I had heard of it from others; I had seen the stragglers from it; small bands of marauders, parties of prisoners

[1]'The Warrior's Soul.' *Tales of Hearsay.*

in the distance. But this was the very column itself. A crawling, stumbling, starved, half-demented mob. It issued from the forest a mile away and its head was lost in the murk of the fields. We rode into it at a trot, which was the most we could get out of our horses, and we stuck in that human mass as if in a moving bog. There was no resistance. I heard a few shots, half a dozen perhaps. Their very senses seemed frozen within them. I had time for a good look while riding at the head of my squadron. Well, I assure you, there were men walking on the outer edge so lost to everything but their misery that they never turned their heads to look at our charge. Soldiers!

My horse pushed over one of them with his chest. The poor wretch had a dragoon's blue cloak, all torn and scorched, hanging from his shoulders, and he didn't even put his hand out to snatch at my bridle and save himself. He just went down. Our troopers were pointing and slashing; well, and of course at first I myself. . . . What would you have! An enemy is an enemy. Yet a sort of sickening awe crept into my heart. There was no tumult —only a low deep murmur dwelt over them interspersed with louder cries and groans while that mob kept on pushing and surging past us, sightless and without feeling. A smell of scorched rags and festering wounds hung in the air. My horse staggered in the eddies of swaying men. But it was like cutting down galvanized corpses that didn't care. Invaders! Yes. . . . God was already dealing with them. . . .

Just then I caught sight of the subaltern of my troop at some little distance from me. His name was Tomassov. That multitude of resurrected bodies with glassy eyes was seething round his horse as if blind, growling crazily. He was sitting erect in his saddle not looking at them and sheathing his sword deliberately.

Idem

ESCAPE FROM A SIBERIAN PRISON[1]

ONE day when I had wandered long in the woods, I completely lost my way, and had not a notion to which side to direct my steps. A hurricane of snow made me literally pirouette. I rolled in the snow with convulsive movements; I could not sleep, but I prayed for death. When day dawned my pains had abated, but

[1]Rufin Pietrowski, a Polish prisoner, makes his escape from Ekaterinski-Zavod, in the winter of 1846.

my strength was utterly exhausted. I strove to guide my course by the sun, or by noticing the moss which grew on the north side of the trees, and dragged myself on for a while by the help of my stick, till the pangs of hunger again attacked me. Wearied with the struggle and with my face covered with cold perspiration I let myself drop at the foot of a tree. Sleep stole over me, accompanied by a humming noise in my ears. I became insensible to everything except the tearing pains in my bowels. I do not know how long I lay like that; I was suddenly roused from it by a man's loud voice:

'Who are you? Where are you going to?'

'I have lost my way.'

'Where do you come from?'

'From Tcherdine. I am on a pilgrimage to Solovetsk.'

He put a wooden bottle to my lips; a mouthful of the brandy revived me but it so burned the stomach that the pains in it made me execute a perfect tarantelle.

'Be quiet,' said my companion as he offered me some bread and dried fish out of his bag and seated himself pulling me down at the foot of a tree beside him. He was a trapper going home with his gun slung over his shoulder and with pattens on his feet.

'Let us step on now,' said he when I had rested. 'Never give in!'

RUFIN PIETROWSKI

THE STORME

THE South and West wynds joyn'd, and, as they blew,
Waves like a rowlling trench before them threw . . .
Jonas, I pitty thee, and curse those men,
Who when the storme ragde most, did wake thee then:[1]
Sleepe is paine's easiest salve, and doth fulfyll
All offices of death, excepte—to kill.
But when I wakt, I sawe that I sawe not:
I and the sunn, which sho'ld teach me, 'had forgott
East, west, day, night; and I cold only say,
Had the world lasted, now yt had bene day.
Thousands our noises were, yet we 'mongst all
Could none by his right name, but thunder call:

[1]Then = than.

Lightninge was all our light, and it rayn'd more
Then if the Sun had drunk the sea before.
Some coffyn'd in their cabbins lye aequally
Greived that they are not dead, and yet must dye: . . .
Some, sittinge on the hatches, wold seeme there
With hideous gazinge to feare away Feare;[1]
There note they the ship's sicknesses, the mast
Shakte with an ague, and the hould and waist
With a salt dropsy clog'd; and all our tacklinges
Snappinge like to too-high-stretcht treble-strings;
And from our tatterd sayles raggs droop down soe,
As from one hangd in chaynes a yeare agoe;
Even our ordynance, plact for our defence,
Strive to breake loose, and scape away from thence.
Pumping hath tyrd our men, and what's the gaine?
Seas into seas throwne, we suck in againe:
Hearing hath deaft our saylors, and if thay
Knew how to heare, there's none knowes what to say.
Compard to these stormes, death is but a qualm,
Hell somewhat lightsome, the Bermudas[2] calm. . . .
All things are one; and that one none can bee,
Since all formes uniforme deformitie
Doth cover; so that we (except God say
Another 'Fiat') shall have noe more day.

JOHN DONNE, 1573–1631

THE STORM

(Polynices, having departed from Thebes by night, is overtaken by a storm.)

'Twas now the time when Phoebus yields to night,
And rising Cynthia sheds her silver light.
Wide o'er the world in solemn pomp she drew,
Her airy chariot hung with pearly dew;
All birds and beasts lie hush'd; sleep steals away
The wild desires of men, and toils of day,
And brings, descending through the silent air,
A sweet forgetfulness of human care.
Yet no red clouds, with golden borders gay,

[1]Feare; used in active sense, terrify.
[2]Bermudas of Shakespeare's 'still vex'd Bermoothes.'

Promise the skies the bright return of day;
No faint reflections of the distant light
Streak with long gleams the scattering shades of night:
From the damp earth impervious vapours rise,
Increase the darkness, and involve the skies.
At once the rushing winds with roaring sound
Burst from th' Aeolian caves, and rend the ground,
With equal rage their airy quarrel try,
And win by turns the kingdom of the sky:
But with a thicker night black Auster shrouds
The heavens, and drives on heaps the rolling clouds,
From whose dark womb a rattling tempest pours,
Which the cold north congeals to haily showers.
From pole to pole the thunder roars aloud,
And broken lightnings flash from every cloud.
Now smokes with showers the misty mountain-ground,
And floated fields lie undistinguish'd round.
Th' Inachian streams with headlong fury run,
And Erasinus rolls a deluge on:
The foaming Lerna swells above its bounds,
And spreads its ancient poisons o'er the grounds;
Where late was dust, now rapid torrents play,
Rush through the mounds, and bear the dams away:
Old limbs of trees from crackling forests torn,
Are whirl'd in air, and on the winds are borne:
The storm the dark Lycaean groves display'd,
And first to light expos'd the sacred shade.
Th' intrepid Theban hears the bursting sky,
Sees yawning rocks in massy fragments fly,
And views astonish'd, from the hills afar,
The floods descending, and the watery war,
That, driven by storms, and pouring o'er the plain,
Swept herds, and hinds, and houses to the main.
Through the brown horrors of the night he fled,
Nor knows, amaz'd, what doubtful path to tread;
His brother's image to his mind appears,
Inflames his heart with rage, and wings his feet with fears.

Thebaidos i. 336–369
STATIUS

Translated by
ALEXANDER POPE, 1688–1744

DEUCALION'S DELUGE[1]

. . . THE list'ning Throng of Deities declare
Just the Resentments of the Thunderer. . . .
He therefore wisely laid his Light'ning by. . . .
To Eolus's Cave bids Boreas go,
And suffers none but wat'ry winds to blow.
With Shower-distilling Wings lets Notus fly,
And spread his wat'ry Pinions thro' the Sky.
Each Part about him bore a watr'y Power,
And from each Silver Hair he drop'd a Shower.
On belly'd Clouds aloft in Air he stands,
Which stream'd upon the Pressure of his Hands.
Iris bedeck'd in Party-colour'd Pride,
With fresh Supplies attended by his side.
The waving Corn destroy'd, the Ploughman's Care
Lay waste, the Labour of the tedious Year.
Nor Jove contented with the Power he had,
But seeks his Sea-commanding Brother's Aid;
Who gave the Orders thro' his watry Train,
In flowing Tides to hasten to the Main.
They came, nor need I (said the Sea-green God)
Use Arguments to bid you spread abroad.
With utmost Force your hidden springs disclose,
O'erflow, nor let the Earth your Strength oppose.
Like Light'ning on they flew, pleas'd to perform
Their Soveraign's Will, and usher forth the Storm.
Then struck his angry Trident on the Earth,
Which trembling, to its wat'ry Stores gave Birth.
O'er Man and Beast the swelling Torrents flow,
Nor Temples could escape their Overthrow;
If ought too strong oppos'd the raging Tide,
Its Summits in the wat'ry Waste were hid.
One Dreary Plain of Water cover'd o'er
The Earth, nor was there to be found a Shore.
For Safety, different Paths poor Mortals try,
Some seek their Ships, some to the Mountains fly,

[1]*The New Miscellany*, 1720. 'Deucalion's *Deluge* from Ovid.' Tr. Anon.

But neither Ships nor Mountains could avail,
Where once they planted Vineyards, now they Sail.

. . . . . .

The Sea Nymphs rais'd their wondering Heads to see
The General, Vast, confus'd Calamity.
Monsters unheard of in the Deep before,
Tigers and Wolves, the formidable Boar,
The Lion dreadful, with a Skin like Gold,
Where sportive Dolphins play'd, they now behold;
Fluttering the Feather'd Race attempt to Fly,
But tired, fall headlong to their Destiny;
One common Ruin now attended all,
Those few the Water spar'd, by Famine fall.

THE ANCIENT MARINER

AND now the storm-blast came, and he
  Was tyrannous and strong;
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
  And chas'd us south along.

With sloping masts and dripping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
  And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
  And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
  And it grew wondrous cold;
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
  As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
  Did send a dismal sheen;
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
  The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
  The ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
  Like noises in a swound.

At length did cross an Albatross,
  Through the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
  We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
  And round and round it flew,
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
  The helmsman steered us through!

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, 1772–1834

FROST AT MIDNIGHT

THE frost performs its secret ministry
Unhelp'd by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before
The inmates of my cottage all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude which suits
Abstruse musings; save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully,
'Tis calm indeed! so calm that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill and wood
This populous village! Sea and hill and wood.
With all the numberless goings on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, everywhere
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

Frost at Midnight
Idem

COLERIDGE TO HIS CHILD

DEAR Babe, that sleepest cradled at my side, . . .
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other love
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw naught lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself. . . .

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eve-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in quiet icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

Frost at Midnight
Idem

IN THE GULF OF LYONS

As day advanced the weather seemed to abate,
And then the leak they reckoned to reduce,
And keep the ship afloat, though three feet yet
Kept two hand—and one chain-pump still in use.
The wind blew fresh again: as it grew late,
A squall came on, and while some guns broke loose,
A gust—which all descriptive power transcends—
Lay with one blast the ship on her beam ends. . . .

Immediately the masts were cut away,
Both main and mizen; first the mizen went,
The main-mast followed: but the ship still lay
Like a mere log, and baffled our intent.
Foremast and bowsprit were cut down, and they
Eased her at last (although we never meant
To part with all till every hope was blighted),
And then with violence the old ship righted. . . .

There's nought, no doubt, so much the spirit calms
As rum and true religion: thus it was,
Some plundered, some drank spirits, some sung psalms,
The high wind made the treble, and as bass
The hoarse harsh waves kept time; fright cured the qualms
Of all the luckless landsmen's sea-sick maws:
Strange sounds of wailing, blasphemy, devotion,
Clamoured in chorus to the roaring ocean. . . .

But now there came a flash of hope once more;
Day broke, and the wind lulled: the masts were gone
The leak increased; shoals round her, but no shore,
The vessel swam, yet still she held her own.
They tried the pumps again, and though before
Their desperate efforts seemed all useless grown,
A glimpse of sunshine set some hands to bale—
The stronger pumped, the weaker thrummed a sail. . . .

Then came the carpenter, at last, with tears
In his rough eyes, and told the captain he,
Could do no more: he was a man in years,
And long had voyaged through many a stormy sea,
And if he wept at length they were not fears
That made his eyelids as a woman's be,
But he, poor fellow, had a wife and children,—
Two things for dying people quite bewildering. . . .

'Twas twilight, and the sunless day went down
Over the waste of waters; like a veil,
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown
Of one whose hate is masked but to assail.

Thus to our hopeless eyes the night was shown,
And grimly darkled o'er the faces pale,
And the dim desolate deep: twelve days had Fear
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

Some trial had been making at a raft,
With little hope in such a rolling sea,
A sort of thing at which one would have laughed,
If any laughter at such times could be,
Unless with people who too much have quaffed,
And have a kind of wild and horrid glee,
Half epileptical, and half hysterical:—
Their preservation would have been a miracle.

At half-past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars,
And all things, for a chance, had been cast loose,
That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
For yet they strove, although of no great use:
There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews;
She gave a heel, and then a lurch to port,
And going down head foremost—sunk, in short. . . .

At first one universal shriek there rushed,
Louder than the loud Ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hushed,
Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
Of billows; but at intervals there gushed,
Accompanied by a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

Don Juan, Canto II
LORD BYRON, 1788-1824

BATTLES

INCIDENT IN THE SPANISH WARS

THE King's (Philip II) representative had formally proclaimed the extermination of man, woman, and child in every city which opposed his authority, but the promulgation and practice of such a system had an opposite effect to the one intended. The hearts of the Hollanders were rather steeled to resistance than awed into submission by the fate of Naarden. A fortunate event, too, was accepted as a lucky omen for the coming conflict. A little fleet of armed vessels, belonging to Holland, had been frozen up in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam. Don Frederick, on his arrival from Naarden, despatched a body of picked men over the ice to attack the imprisoned vessels. The crews had, however, fortified themselves by digging a wide trench around the whole fleet, which thus became for the moment an almost impregnable fortress. Out of this frozen citadel a strong band of well-armed and skilful musketeers sallied forth upon skates as the besieging force advanced. A rapid, brilliant and slippery skirmish succeeded, in which the Hollanders, so accustomed to such sports, easily vanquished their antagonists, and drove them off the field, with the loss of several hundred left dead upon the ice. "Twas a thing never heard of before to-day,' said Alva, 'to see a body of arquebusiers thus skirmishing upon a frozen sea.' In the course of the next four-and-twenty hours, a flood and a rapid thaw released the vessels, which all escaped to Enkhuyzen, while a frost, immediately and strangely succeeding, made pursuit impossible.

The Rise of the Dutch Republic
JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY, 1814–1877

LE CŒUR DE HIALMAR

UNE nuit claire, un vent glacé. La neige est rouge.
Mille braves sont là qui dorment sans tombeaux,
L'épée au poing, les yeux hagards. Pas un ne bouge.
Au-dessus tourne et crie un vol de noirs corbeaux.

La lune froide verse au loin sa pâle flamme.
Hialmar se soulève entre les morts sanglants,
Appuyé des deux mains au tronçon de sa lame.
La pourpre du combat ruisselle de ses flancs.

— Holà! Quelqu'un a-t-il encore un peu d'haleine,
Parmi tant de joyeux et robustes garçons
Qui, ce matin, riaient et chantaient à voix pleine
Comme des merles dans l'épaisseur des buissons?

Tous sont muets. Mon casque est rompu, mon armure
Est trouée, et la hache a fait sauter ses clous.
Mes yeux saignent. J'entends un immense murmure
Pareil aux hurlements de la mer ou des loups.

Viens par ici, Corbeau, mon brave mangeur d'hommes!
Ouvre-moi la poitrine avec ton bec de fer.
Tu nous retrouveras demain tels que nous sommes.
Porte mon cœur tout chaud à la fille d'Ylmer.

Dans Upsal, où les Jarls boivent la bonne bière,
Et chantent, en heurtant les cruches d'or, en chœur,
A tire d'aile vole, ô rôdeur de bruyère!
Cherche ma fiancée et porte-lui mon cœur.

Au sommet de la tour que hantent les corneilles
Tu la verras debout, blanche, aux longs cheveux noirs.
Deux anneaux d'argent fin lui pendent aux oreilles,
Et ses yeux sont plus clairs que l'astre des beaux soirs.

Va, sombre messager, dis-lui bien que je l'aime,
Et que voici mon cœur. Elle reconnaîtra
Qu'il est rouge et solide et non tremblant et blême;
Et la fille d'Ylmer, Corbeau, te sourira!

Moi, je meurs. Mon esprit coule par vingt blessures.
J'ai fait mon temps. Buvez, ô loups, mon sang vermeil.
Jeune, brave, riant, libre et sans flétrissures,
Je vais m'asseoir parmi les Dieux, dans le soleil!

LECONTE DE LISLE, 1818–1894

DECEMBER 1740

RAIN still heavier, rain as of Noah, continued through this Tuesday, and for days afterwards: but the Prussian hosts, hastening towards Glogau, marched still on. This Tuesday's march, for the rearward of the army, 10,000 foot and 2,000 horse; march of ten hours long from Weichau to the hamlet of Mikau (where his Majesty sits busy and affable)—is thought to be the wettest on record. Waters all out, bridges down, the Country one wild lake of eddying mud. Up to the knee for many miles together; up to the middle for long spaces; sometimes even up to the chin or deeper, where your bridge was washed away. The Prussians marched through it, as if they had been slate or iron. Rank and file, nobody quitted his rank, nobody looked sour in the face; they took the pouring of the skies and the red seas of terrestrial liquid as matters that must be; cheered one another with jocosities, with choral snatches (tobacco, I consider, would not burn); and swashed unwearily forward. Ten hours some of them were out, their march being twenty or twenty-five miles; ten or fifteen was the average distance come. Nor, singular to say, did any loss occur; except of *almost* one poor Army-Chaplain, and altogether one poor Soldier's Wife;—sank dangerously both of them, beyond redemption she, taking the wrong side of some bridge parapet. Poor Soldier's Wife she is not named to me at all; and has no history save this, and that 'she was of the regiment Bredow.' But I perceive she washed herself away in a World-transaction; and there was one rough Bredower who probably sat sad that night on getting to quarters. His Majesty surveyed the damp battalions on the morrow (21st) not without sympathy, not without satisfaction; allowed them a rest day here at Mikau, to get dry and bright again; and gave them 'fifteen thalers a company,' which is about nine-pence apiece, with some words of praise.'

History of Frederick the Great
THOMAS CARLYLE, 1795–1881

MARLBOROUGH THE MILKSOP[1]

How do you continue to exist on your mountain in this rude season? Sure you must be become a snowball. The streets are abandoned, nothing appears in them; the Thames is almost as solid. Then think what a campaign must be in such a season! Our army was under arms for fourteen hours on the twenty-third, expecting the French; and several of the men were frozen when they should have dismounted. What milksops the Marlboroughs and Turennes, the Blakes and the Van Tromps appear now, who whipped into winter quarters and into port, the moment their noses appeared blue. Sir Cloudesley Shovel said that an Admiral would deserve to be broke, who kept great ships out after the end of September, and to be shot if after October.

HORACE WALPOLE, 1717–1797

[1]Letter to George Montagu, Jan. 14, 1760.

CHRISTMAS AT SEA

THE sheets were frozen hard, and they cut the naked hand;
The decks were like a slide, where a seaman scarce could stand;
The wind was a nor'wester, blowing squally off the sea;
And cliffs and spouting breakers were the only things a-lee.

They heard the surf a-roaring before the break of day;
But 'twas only with the peep of light we saw how ill we lay.
We tumbled every hand on deck instanter, with a shout,
And we gave her the maintops'l, and stood by to go about.

All day we tacked between the South Head and the North;
All day we hauled the frozen sheets, and got no further forth;
All day as cold as charity, in bitter pain and dread,
For very life and nature we tacked from head to head.

We gave the South a wider berth, for there the tide-race roared;
But every tack we made we brought the North Head close aboard:
So's we saw the cliffs and houses, and the breakers running high,
And the coastguard in his garden, with his glass against his eye.

SOLDIER'S AND SAILOR'S WINTER

The frost was on the village roofs as white as ocean foam;
The good red fires were burning bright in every 'longshore home;
The windows sparkled clear, and the chimneys volleyed out;
And I vow we sniffed the victuals as the vessel went about.

The bells upon the church were rung with a mighty jovial cheer
For it's just that I should tell you how (of all days in the year)
This day of our adversity was blessèd Christmas morn,
And the house above the coastguard's was the house where I was born.

O well I saw the pleasant room, the pleasant faces there,
My mother's silver spectacles, my father's silver hair;
And well I saw the firelight, like a flight of homely elves,
Go dancing round the china-plates that stand upon the shelves.

And well I knew the talk they had, the talk that was of me,
Of the shadow on the household and the son that went to sea;
And O the wicked fool I seemed, in every kind of way,
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessèd Christmas Day.

They lit the high sea-light, and the dark began to fall,
'All hands to loose topgallant sails,' I heard the captain call,
'By the Lord, she'll never stand it,' our first mate, Jackson, cried,
. . . 'It's the one way or the other, Mr. Jackson,' he replied.

She staggered to her bearings, but the sails were new and good.
And the ship smelt up to windward just as though she understood.
As the winter's day was ending, in the entry of the night,
We cleared the weary headland, and passed below the light.

And they heaved a mighty breath, every soul on board but me,
As they saw her nose again pointing handsome out to sea;
But all that I could think of, in the darkness and the cold,
Was just that I was leaving home and my folks were growing old.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, 1850–1894

REVELLER'S AND
FIRESIDE WINTER

REVELLER'S AND FIRESIDE WINTER

Madam, it seems that Thames is frozen over.
Could we not, donning vizors, leave the dance,
and with the stars for link-boys let a lover
lead to the sheeted tideways of romance?

Let music be. Our souls will find a string
when the vielle and dulcimer are mute,
fit for an angel softly fingering
love's overture upon a treble lute.

Aye, chairman, set us down. We're for a ball
where neither sword nor stekes is allowed,
but only the simple heart that, stripped of all
but love, can dance lavoltas on a cloud.

We shall not need those shoes with wings of steel,
like Mercury's, on which the Dutchmen skate
their wolds, who, if we lift our forehead, feel
the air blown backward by the speed of Fate.

Beneath us, as we glide, becalmed the stream
strains at the cables of the frost, but we
who until this were anchored to a dream,
may cast off now, and set the sails for sea.

REVELLER'S AND FIRESIDE WINTER

		PAGE
SORACTE	Translated by *C. S. Calverley* 1831–1884	171
RYMES OF THE MINSTRELS		172
XI.	*Fifteenth Century*	172
XII.		173
CHRISTMAS AT HAMPTON COURT	*Dudley Carleton's Letter*, 1604	174
Twelth Day		174
ECLOGUE	*John Donne* 1573–1631	174
HERRICK'S WINTER		175
New Year's Gift sent to Sir Simon Steward	*Robert Herrick* 1591–1674	175
To Lar		177
His Age		177
WHEN AS THE CHILL CHAROKKO BLOWS	*Anon.*	182
PEPYS' WINTER		182
Court Ball	*Samuel Pepys* 1632–1703	182
Christmas Day		184
'The New Droll'		184
Dancing and Music		185
Another Christmas		186
Twelfth Night		187
Etheredge's New Play		188
JAUNT INTO THE COUNTRY	*Horace Walpole* 1717–1797	190
THE JOLLY BEGGARS	*Robert Burns* 1759–1796	190
O WILLIE BREW'D A PECK OF MAUT	*Robert Burns*	193
FIRESIDE	*John Clare*	194
THE COMFORT OF THE ALE HOUSE	1793–1864	195
BED TIME TALES		196
A CHRISTMAS HOAX	*Charles Lamb* 1775–1834	196
ZUMMER AND WINTER	*W. Barnes* 1801–1886	199
A CHRISTMAS GHOST STORY	*Thomas Love Peacock* 1785–1866	199
BOILED WITH HIS OWN PLUM PUDDING	*Charles Dickens*	201
BOB CRATCHIT'S CHRISTMAS	1812–1870	201

REVELLER'S AND FIRESIDE WINTER

SORACTE

One dazzling mass of solid snow
Soracte stands; the bent wood fret
Beneath their load; and, sharpest-set
With frost, the streams have ceased to flow.

Pile on great faggots and break up
The ice; let influence more benign
Enter with four-years-treasured wine,
Fetched in the ponderous Sabine cup:

Leave to the Gods all else. When they
Have once bid rest the winds that war
Over the passionate seas, no more
Gray ash and cypress rock and sway.

Ask not what future suns shall bring:
Count to-day gain, whate'er it chance
To be: nor, young man, scorn the dance
Nor deem sweet love an idle thing.

Ere Time thy April youth hath changed
To sourness, park and public walk
Attract thee now, and whispered talk
At twilight meetings pre-arranged;

Hear now the pretty laugh that tells
In what dim corner lurks thy love;
And snatch a bracelet or a glove
From wrist or hand that scarce rebels.

HORACE, *Carminum*, I. 9
Translated by C. S. CALVERLEY, 1831–1884

RYMES OF THE MINSTRELS

XI

Bryng us in good ale, and bryng us in good ale;
For owr blyssyd lady sak, bryng us in good ale.

BRYNG us in no browne bred, fore that is mad of brane,
Nor bryng us in no whyt bred, fore therin is no game;
But bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no befe, for ther is many bonys,
But bryng us in good ale, for that goth down at onys;
And bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no bacon, for that is passyng fate,
But bryng us in good ale, and gyfe us i-nough of that;
And bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no mutton, for that is often lene,
Nor bryng us in no trypes, for thei be syldom clene;
But bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no eggys, for ther ar many schelles,
But bryng us in good ale, and gyfe us no[th]yng ellys;
And bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no butter, for therin ar many herys,
Nor bryng us in no pygges flesch, for that wyl mak us borys;
But bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no podynges, for therin is al Godes good,
Nor bryng us in no venesen, for that is not for owr blod;
But bryng us in good ale.

Bryng us in no capons flesch, for that is ofte der,
Nor bryng us in no dokes flesche, for thei slober in the mer;
But bryng us in good ale.

Fifteenth Century

XII

Doll thi ale, doll, doll thi ale, dole,
Ale mak many a mane to have a doty poll.

ALE mak many a mane to styk at a brere;
Ale mak many a mane to ly in the myere;
And ale mak many a mane to slep by the fyere;
With doll.

Ale mak many a mane to stombyl at a stone;
Ale mak many a mane to go dronken home;
And ale mak many a mane to brek hys tone;
With doll.

Ale mak many a mane to draw hys knyfe;
Ale mak many a mane to mak gret stryfe;
And ale mak many a mane to bet hys wyf;
With dole.

Ale mak many a mane to wet hys chekes;
Ale mak many a mane to ly in the stretes;
And ale mak many a mane to wet hys shetes;
With dole.

Ale mak many a mane to stombyll at the blokkes;
Ale mak many a mane to mak hys hed have knokkes;
And ale mak many a mane to syt in the stokkes;
With dol.

Ale mak many a mane to ryne over the falows;
Ale mak many a mane to swere by God and alhalows;
And ale mak many a mane to hang upon the galows;
With doll.

Fifteenth Century

CHRISTMAS AT HAMPTON COURT IN 1604

'We have had a merry Christmas and nothing to disquiet us save brabbles amongst our ambassadors, and one or two poor companions that died of the plague. The first holidays we had every night a public play in the great hall at which the King was ever present, and had liked or disliked as he saw cause; but it seems he takes no extraordinary pleasure in them. The Queen and Prince were more the players' friends, for on other nights they had them privately; and have since taken them to their protection.'

DUDLEY CARLETON'S 'LETTER,' 1604

TWELFTH DAY

The Twelfth Day the French ambassador was feasted publicly, and at night there was a play in the Queen's presence, with a masquerade of certain Scotchmen; who came in with a sword dance, not unlike a matachin; and performed it cleanly; from whence the King went to dice, into his own presence, and lost 500 crowns which marred a gamester; for since he appeared not there but once before was at it in the same place and parted a winner. The Sunday following was the great day of the Queen's masque, at which was present the Spanish and Polaek ambassadors with their whole trains, and the most part of the Florentines and Savoyards, but not the ambassadors themselves, who were in so strong competition for place and precedence, that to displease neither it was thought best to let both alone.'

Idem

ECLOGUE

DECEMBER 26, 1613

(Allophanes finding Idios in the country in Christmas-time, reprehends his absence from Court at the marriage of the Earl of Somerset.)

Unseasonable man! statue of ice!
What could to country's solitude entice
Thee in this year's cold and decrepit time?

Nature's instinct draws to the warmer clime
Ev'n smaller birds who by that courage dare
In numerous fleets sail through their sea, the air.
What delicacy can in fields appear,
Whilst Flora herself doth a frieze jerkin wear?
Whilst winds do all the trees and hedges strip
Of leaves, to furnish rods enough to whip
Thy madness from thee, and all springs by frost
Having tak'n cold and their sweet murmurs lost?
If thou thy faults, or fortunes wouldst lament
With just solemnity do it in Lent.

JOHN DONNE, 1573–1631

HERRICK'S WINTER

A NEW-YEAR'S GIFT SENT TO SIR SIMON STEWARD

No news of navies burnt at seas;
No noise of late-spawn'd tittyries;
No closet plot, or open vent,
That frights men with a parliament;
No new device or late-found trick
To read by the stars the kingdom's sick;
No gin to catch the state, or wring
The freeborn nostril of the king,
We send to you; but here a jolly
Verse, crown'd with ivy and with holly,
That tells of winter's tales and mirth,
That milkmaids make about the hearth,
Of Christmas sports, the wassail-bowl,
That['s] tost up, after fox-i'-th'-hole;
Of blind-man-buff, and of the care
That young men have to shoe the mare;
Of Twelfth-tide cakes, of peas and beans,
Wherewith you make those merry scenes,
Whenas ye choose your king and queen,

Tittyries, i.e., *the Tityre-tues.*
Fox-i'-th'-hole, *a game of hopping.*
To shoe the mare, *or shoe the wild mare, a Christmas game.*

And cry out: *Hey, for our town green;*
Of ash-heaps, in the which ye use
Husbands and wives by streaks to choose;
Of crackling laurel, which fore-sounds
A plenteous harvest to your grounds:
Of these and such-like things for shift,
We send instead of New-Year's gift.
Read then, and when your faces shine
With buxom meat and cap'ring wine,
Remember us in cups full crown'd,
And let our city-health go round,
Quite through the young maids and the men
To the ninth number, if not ten;
Until the fired chestnuts leap
For joy to see the fruits ye reap
From the plump chalice and the cup,
That tempts till it be tossed up;
Then as ye sit about your embers,
Call not to mind those fled Decembers,
But think on these that are t' appear
As daughters to the instant year:
Sit crown'd with rosebuds, and carouse
Till Liber Pater twirls the house
About your ears; and lay upon
The year your cares that's fled and gone.
And let the russet swains the plough
And harrow hang up, resting now;
And to the bagpipe all address,
Till sleep takes place of weariness.
And thus, throughout, with Christmas plays
Frolic the full twelve holidays.

Hesperides
ROBERT HERRICK, 1591–1674

Buxom, *tender.*
Liber Pater, *Father Bacchus.*

TO LAR

No more shall I, since I am driven hence,
Devote to thee my grains of frankincense;
No more shall I from mantle-trees hang down,
To honour thee, my little parsley crown;
No more shall I (I fear me) to thee bring
My chives of garlic for an offering;
No more shall I from henceforth hear a choir
Of merry crickets by my country fire.
Go where I will, thou lucky Lar stay here,
Warm by a glitt'ring chimney all the year.

Idem

Chives, *shreds.*

HIS AGE, DEDICATED TO HIS PECULIAR FRIEND, M. JOHN WICKES, UNDER THE NAME OF POSTHUMUS

Ah Posthumus! our years hence fly,
And leave no sound; nor piety,
Or prayers, or vow
Can keep the wrinkle from the brow;
But we must on,
As fate does lead or draw us; none,
None, Posthumus, could ere decline
The doom of cruel Proserpine.

The pleasing wife, the house, the ground,
Must all be left, no one plant found
To follow thee,
Save only the curs'd cypress tree;
A merry mind
Looks forward, scorns what's left behind;
Let's live, my Wickes, then, while we may,
And here enjoy our holiday.

W'ave seen the past best times, and these
Will ne'er return; we see the seas
And moons to wane

Posthumus, *the name is taken from Horace, Ode II.* 14, *from which the beginning of this lyric is translated.*

But they fill up their ebbs again;
But vanish'd man,
Like to a lily lost, ne'er can,
Ne'er can repullulate, or bring
His days to see a second spring.

But on we must, and thither tend,
Where Anchus and rich Tullus blend
Their sacred seed:
Thus has infernal Jove decreed;
We must be made,
Ere long a song, ere long a shade.
Why then, since life to us is short,
Let's make it full up by our sport.

Crown we our heads with roses then,
And 'noint with Tyrian balm; for when
We two are dead,
The world with us is buried.
Then live we free
As is the air, and let us be
Our own fair wind, and mark each one
Day with the white and lucky stone.

We are not poor, although we have
No roofs of cedar, nor our brave
Baiæ, nor keep
Account of such a flock of sheep;
Nor bullocks fed
To lard the shambles: barbels bred
To kiss our hands; nor do we wish
For Pollio's lampreys in our dish.

If we can meet and so confer
Both by a shining salt-cellar,
And have our roof,

Repullulate, *be born again.*

Anchus and rich Tullus, *Herrick is again translating from Horace, Ode iv.* 7, 14.

Baiæ, *the favourite sea-side resort of the Romans in the time of Horace.*

Pollio, *Vedius Pollio, who fed his lampreys with human flesh.* Ob., B.C. 15.

Although not arch'd, yet weather-proof,
And ceiling free
From that cheap candle bawdery;
We'll eat our bean with that full mirth
As we were lords of all the earth.

Well then, on what seas we are toss'd,
Our comfort is, we can't be lost.
Let the winds drive
Our barque, yet she will keep alive
Amidst the deeps.
'Tis constancy, my Wickes, which keeps
The pinnace up; which, though she errs
I' th' seas, she saves her passengers.

Say, we must part (sweet mercy bless
Us both i' th' sea, camp, wilderness),
Can we so far
Stray to become less circular
Than we are now?
No, no, that self-same heart, that vow
Which made us one, shall ne'er undo,
Or ravel so to make us two.

Live in thy peace; as for myself,
When I am bruised on the shelf
Of time, and show
My locks behung with frost and snow;
When with the rheum,
The cough, the ptisick, I consume
Unto an almost nothing; then
The ages fled I'll call again,

And with a tear compare these last
Lame and bad times with those are past;
While Baucis by,
My old lean wife, shall kiss it dry.
And so we'll sit

Bawdery, *dirt (with no moral meaning).*

Circular, *self-sufficing, the 'in se ipso totus teres atque rotundus' of Horace. Sat. ii.* 7, 86.

By th' fire, foretelling snow and sleet,
And weather by our aches, grown
Now old enough to be our own

True calendars, as puss's ear
Washed o'er's, to tell what change is near:
Then to assuage
The gripings of the chine by age,
I'll call my young
Iülus to sing such a song
I made upon my Julia's breast;
And of her blush at such a feast.

Then shall he read that flower of mine,
Enclos'd within a crystal shrine;
A primrose next;
A piece, then, of a higher text,
For to beget
In me a more transcendent heat
Than that insinuating fire,
Which crept into each aged sire,

When the fair Helen, from her eyes,
Shot forth her loving sorceries;
At which I'll rear
Mine aged limbs above my chair,
And, hearing it,
Flutter and crow as in a fit
Of fresh concupiscence, and cry:
No lust there's like to poetry.

Thus, frantic-crazy man, God wot,
I'll call to mind things half-forgot,
And oft between
Repeat the times that I have seen!
Thus ripe with tears,
And twisting my Iülus' hairs,
Doting, I'll weep and say, in truth,
Baucis, these were my sins of youth.

Iülus, *the son of Æneas.*

Then next I'll cause my hopeful lad,

Rudolf

Mondenschein und Kerzenschimmer

WHEN AS THE CHILL CHAROKKO BLOWS

When as the chill Charokko blows,
And Winter tells a heavy tale;
When pyes and daws and rooks and crows
Sit cursing of the frost and snows;
Then give me ale.

Ale in a Saxon rumkin then,
Such as will make grimalkin prate;
Bids valour burgeon in tall men,
Quickens the poet's wit and pen,
Despises fate.

Ale, that the absent battle fights,
And frames the march of Swedish drum,
Disputes with princes, laws, and rights,
What's done and past tells mortal wights,
And what's to come.

Ale, that the plowman's heart up-keeps
And equals it with tyrants' thrones,
That wipes the eye that over-weeps,
And lulls in sure and dainty sleeps
Th' o'er-wearied bones.

Grandchild of Ceres, Bacchus' daughter,
Wine's emulous neighbour, though but stale,
Ennobling all the nymphs of water,
And filling each man's heart with laughter—
Ha! give me ale!

ANONYMOUS

Charokko, *Scirocco.*

PEPYS' WINTER

COURT BALL, NOVEMBER, 1666

15th. To Mrs. Pierce's, where I find her as fine as possible, and Mr. Pierce going to the ball at night at Court, it being the Queen's birth-day. I also to the ball, and with much ado got up to the loft, where with much trouble I could see very well.

Anon the house grew full, and the candles light, and the King and Queen and all the ladies sat: and it was, indeed, a glorious sight to see Mrs. Stewart in black and white lace, and her head and shoulders dressed with diamonds, and the like many great ladies more, only the Queen none; and the King in his rich vest of some rich silk and silver trimming, as the Duke of York and all the dancers were, some of cloth of silver, and others of other sorts, exceeding rich. Presently after the King was come in, he took the Queen, and about fourteen more couple there was, and begun the Bransles. As many of the men as I can remember presently, were, the King, Duke of York, Prince Rupert, Duke of Monmouth, Duke of Buckingham, Lord Douglas, Mr. [George] Hamilton, Colonell Russell, Mr. Griffith, Lord Ossory, Lord Rochester; and of the ladies, the Queen, Duchess of York, Mrs. Stewart, Duchess of Monmouth, Lady Essex Howard,[1] Mrs. Temple,[2] Swedes Embassadress,[3] Lady Arlington, Lord George Barkeley's daughter,[4] and many others I remember not; but all most excellently dressed in rich petticoats and gowns, and diamonds, and pearls. After the Bransles, then to a Corant, and now and then a French dance; but that so rare, that the Corants grew tiresome, that I wished it done. Only Mrs. Stewart danced mighty finely, and many French dances, specially one the King called the New Dance, which was very pretty; but upon the whole matter, the business of the dancing of itself was not extraordinary pleasing. But the clothes

[1]Only daughter of James Howard, third Earl of Suffolk, by his first wife Susan, daughter of Henry Rich, Earl of Holland; afterwards married, 4th March, 1666-7, at St. Margaret's, Westminster, to Edward Griffin, Lord Griffin of Braybrooke. There is a very fine portrait of her at Audley End, by Lely.

[2]Anne, daughter and co-heir of Thomas Temple, of Frankton, in Warwickshire, by Rebecca, daughter of Sir Nicholas Carew, of Beddington, in Surrey, became the second wife of Sir Charles Lyttelton, who had been Governor of Jamaica, and lived to be eighty-seven. His lady survived him four years, dying in 1718, and had issue by him eight daughters and five sons. From this alliance the Lords Lyttelton descend.

[3]"The Lord George Flemming, the Lord Peter Julius Coyet, ambassadors-extraordinary from the Crown of Sweden, made their public entry through the City of London, on the 27th June, 1666."—Pointer's *History*, vol. i. p. 213. The lady was the wife of one of these.

[4] George, Lord Berkeley, had six daughters. The one mentioned here was probably the eldest, Lady Elizabeth.

and sight of the persons were indeed very pleasing, and worth my coming, being never likely to see more gallantry while I live, if I should come twenty times. About twelve at night it broke up. So away home with my wife: was displeased with the dull dancing, and satisfied with the clothes and persons. My Lady Castlemaine, without whom all is nothing, being there, very rich, though not dancing.

Diary of Samuel Pepys
SAMUEL PEPYS, 1632–1703

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1666

25th. (Christmas day.) Lay pretty long in bed, and then rose, leaving my wife desirous to sleep, having sat up till four this morning, seeing her maids make mince-pies. I to church, where our parson Mills made a good sermon. Then home, and dined well on some good ribbs of beef roasted, and mince pies; only my wife, brother, and Barker, and plenty of good wine of my own, and my heart full of true joy; and thanks to God Almighty for the goodness of my condition at this day. After dinner, I begun to teach my wife and Barker my song, ' It is decreed,' which pleases me mightily. Walked alone on foot to the Temple, thinking to have seen a play all alone; but there, missing of any bills, concluded there was none, and so back home; and there with my brother reducing the names of all my books to an alphabet, and then to supper and to bed.

Idem

THE NEW DROLL, JANUARY, 1667

4th. Comes our company to dinner; my Lord Brouncker, Sir W. Pen, his lady, and Pegg, and her servant, Mr. Lowther. I had good room for ten, and no more would my table have held well, had Sir J. Minnes, who had fallen lame, and his sister, and niece, and Sir W. Batten come, which was a great content to me to be without them. I did make them all gaze to see themselves served so nobly in plate, and a neat dinner, indeed, though but of seven dishes. My Lady Batten home, her ague-fit coming on her at table. At night to sup, and then to cards; and, last of all, to have a flaggon of ale and apples, drunk

out of a wood cup,[1] as a Christmas draught, which made all merry; and they full of admiration at my plate. Mr. Lowther a pretty gentleman, too good for Peg. Sir W. Pen was much troubled to hear the song I sung, 'The New Droll'[2]—it touching him home.

Idem

DANCING AND MUSIC, JANUARY, 1667

24th. At the office, we were frighted with news of fire at Sir W. Batten's by a chimney taking fire, and it put me into much fear and trouble, but with a great many hands and pains it was soon stopped. I home, where most of my company come of this end of the town—Mercer and her sister, Mr. Batelier and Pembleton, my Lady Pen, and Pegg, and Mr. Lowther, but did not stay long and I believe it was by Sir W. Pen's order; for they had a great mind to have staid, and also Captain Rolt. And anon, at about seven or eight o'clock, comes Mr. Harris, of the Duke's playhouse, and brings Mrs. Pierce with him, and also one dressed like a country-maid with a straw hat on; and, at first, I could not tell who it was, though I expected Knipp: but it was she coming off the stage just as she acted this day in 'The Goblins'; a merry jade. Now my house is full, and four fiddlers that play well. Harris I first took to my closet; and I find him a very curious and understanding person in all pictures and other things, and a man of fine conversation; and so is Rolt. So away with all my company down to the office, and there fell to dancing, and continued at it an hour or two, there coming Mrs. Anne Jones, a merchant's daughter hard by, who dances well, and all in mighty good humour, and danced with great pleasure; and then sung and then danced, and then sung many things of three voices—both Harris and Rolt singing their parts excellently. Among other things, Harris sung his Irish song—the

[1]A mazer cup, generally of wood, of a quadrangular form, with a handle on each of the sides. See a curious note on mazers, used as large drinking cups or goblets, in Sir Walter Scott's *Poetical Works*, p. 488, edit. 1848.

[2]There is a song called 'The New Droll,' in a scarce volume, entitled *The Loyal Garland*, printed for T. Perssinger, at the Three Bibles, on London Bridge, 1686: see *Fugitive Tracts*, published by the Percy Society, in 1849.

strangest in itself, and the prettiest sung by him, that ever I heard. Then to supper in the Office, a cold, good supper, and wondrous merry. Here was Mrs. Turner, also, and Mrs. Markham: after supper to dancing again and singing, and so continued till almost three in the morning, and then, with extraordinary pleasure, broke up—only towards morning, Knipp fell a little ill, and so my wife home with her to put her to bed, and we continued dancing and singing; and, among other things, our Mercer unexpectedly did happen to sing an Italian song I know not, of which they two sung the other two parts—two that did almost ravish me, and made me in love with her more than ever with her singing. As late as it was, yet Rolt and Harris would go home to-night, and walked it, though I had a bed for them; and it proved dark, and a misty night, and very windy. The company being all gone to their homes, I up with Mrs. Pierce to Knipp, who was in bed; and we waked her, and sung a song, and then left my wife to see Mrs. Pierce in bed to her, in our best chamber, and so to bed myself, my mind mightily satisfied: only the musique did not please me, they not being contented with less than 30*s*.

Idem

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS, 1667

25th. Being a fine, light, moonshine morning, home round the city, and stopped and dropped money at five or six places, which I was the willinger to do, it being Christmas-day, and so home, and there find my wife in bed, and Jane and the maid making pyes. So I to bed. Rose about nine, and to church, and there heard a dull sermon of Mr. Mills, but a great many fine people at church; and so home. Wife and girl and I alone at dinner—a good Christmas dinner. My wife reading to me 'The History of the Drummer of Mr. Mompesson,' which is a strange story of spies, and worth reading indeed. In the evening comes Mr. Pelling, and he sat and supped with us; and very good company, he reciting to us many copies of good verses of Dr. Wilde's, who writ 'Iter Boreale.'

26th. To the Swan, and by chance met Mr. Spicer and another 'Chequer clerk, and there made them drink. At my bookseller's, and there bought Mr. Harrington's works, 'Oceana.' etc., and two other books, which cost me £4. Home, and there eat a bit, and then with my wife to the King's playhouse, and

there saw 'The Surprizall' ; which did not please me to-day, the actors not pleasing me; and especially Nell's acting of a serious part, which she spoils. I hear this day that Mrs. Stewart do at this day keep a great court at Somerset House, with her husband the Duke of Richmond, she being visited for her beauty's sake by people, as the Queen is, at nights; and they say also that she is likely to go to Court again, and there put my Lady Castlemaine's nose out of joynt.

Idem

TWELFTH NIGHT, 1668

6th. Up, leaving my wife to get herself ready, and the maids to get a supper ready against night for our company; and to White Hall, and there met with Mr. Pierce, by whom I find, as I was afraid from the folly of my wife, that he understood that he and his wife was to dine at my house to-day, whereas it was to sup; and therefore I did go home to dinner, and there find Mr. Harris, by the like mistake, come to dine with me. However, we did get a pretty dinner ready for him; and there he and I to discourse of many things, and I do find him a very excellent person, such as in my whole [acquaintance] I do not know another better qualified for converse, whether in things of his own trade, or of other kind, a man of great understanding and observation, and very agreeable in the manner of his discourse, and civil as far as is possible. I was mightily pleased with his company; and after dinner, did take coach with him, and my wife and girl, to go to a play, to carry him thence to his own house. Away to the Duke of York's house, in the pit, and so left my wife; and to Mrs. Pierce, and took her and her cozen Corbet, Knipp and little James, and brought them to the Duke's house; and, the house being full, was forced to carry them to a box, which did cost me 20*s*., besides oranges, which troubled me, though their company did please me. Thence, after the play, stayed till Harris was undressed, there being acted 'the Tempest,' and so he withal, all by coach, home, where we find my house with good fires and candles ready, and our Office the like, and the two Mercers, and Betty Turner, Pembleton, and W. Batelier. And so with much pleasure we into the house, and there fell to dancing, having extraordinary musick, two viollins, and a base viollin, and theorbo, four hands, the Duke of Buckingham's musick, the best in towne, sent me by Greeling, and there we

set in to dancing. By and by to my house, to a very good supper, and mighty merry, and good musick playing; and after supper to dancing and singing till about twelve at night; and then we had a good sack posset for them, and an excellent cake, cost me near 20*s*., of our Jane's making, which was cut into twenty pieces, there being by this time so many of our company, by the coming in of young Goodyer and some others of our neighbours, young men that could dance, hearing of our dancing; and anon comes in Mrs. Turner, the mother, and brings with her Mrs. Hollworthy, which pleased me mightily. And so to dancing again, and singing, with extraordinary great pleasure, till about two in the morning, and then broke up; and Mrs. Pierce and her family, and Harris and Knipp by coach home, as late as it was. And they gone, I took Mrs. Turner and Hollworthy home to my house, and there gave wine and sweetmeats, but I find Mrs. Hollworthy but a mean woman, I think, for understanding, only a little conceited, and proud, and talking, but nothing extraordinary in person, or discourse, or understanding. They being gone, I paid the fiddlers £3 among the four, and so away to bed.

Idem

ETHEREGE'S NEW PLAY, FEBRUARY, 1668

6th. Sir H. Cholmly tells me how the Parliament, which is to meet again to-day, are likely to fall heavy on the business of the Duke of Buckingham's pardon; and I shall be glad of it: and that the King hath put out of the Court the two Hides,[1] my Lord Chancellor's two sons, and also the Bishops of Rochester[2] and Winchester,[3] the latter of whom should have preached before him yesterday, being Ash-Wednesday, and had his sermon ready, but was put by; which is great news. My wife being gone before, I to the Duke of York's playhouse; where a new play of Etheridge's,[4] called 'She Would if she Could'; and though I was

[1]Lord Cornbury and Laurence Hyde.

[2]John Dolben, afterwards Archbishop of York.

[3]George Morley.

[4]Sir George Etherege, the celebrated wit and dramatic writer. He is said to have died in France, subsequently to the Revolution, having followed the fortunes of his royal master, James II.

there by two o'clock, there were 1000 people put back that could not have room in the pit; and I at last, because my wife was there, made shift to get into the 18*d*. box, and there saw; but, Lord! how full was the house, and how silly the play, there being nothing in the world good in it, and few people pleased in it. The King was there; but I sat mightily behind, and could see but little, and hear not all. The play being done, I into the pit to look for my wife, it being dark and raining, but could not find her; and so staid going between the two doors and through the pit an hour and a half, I think, after the play was done; the people staying there till the rain was over, and to talk with one another. And, among the rest, here was the Duke of Buckingham to-day openly sat in the pit; and there I found him with my Lord Buckhurst and Sedley, and Etheridge the poet; the last of whom I did hear mightily find fault with the actors, that they were out of humour, and had not their parts perfect,[1] and that Harris did do nothing, nor could so much as sing a ketch in it; and so was mightily concerned: while all the rest did, through the whole pit, blame the play as a silly, dull thing, though there was something very roguish and witty; but the design of the play, and end, mighty insipid. At last I did find my wife; and with her was Betty Turner, Mercer, and Deb. So I got a coach, and a humour took us, and I carried them to Hercules Pillars, and there did give them a kind of a supper of about 7*s*., and very merry, and home round the town, not through the ruines; and it was pretty how the coachman by mistake drives us into the ruines from London-wall into Coleman Street: and would persuade me that I lived there. And the truth is, I did think that he and the linkman had contrived some roguery; but it proved only a mistake of the coachman; but it was a cunning place to have done us a mischief in, as any I know, to drive us out of the road into the ruines, and there stop, while nobody could be called to help us. But we come safe home.

Idem

[1]Shadwell confirms this complaint of Etherege's in the Preface to his own *Humorists*. Harris played Sir Josceline Jolly.

JAUNT INTO THE COUNTRY

JANUARY, 1766

I AM perfectly well, though to be sure Lapland is the torrid zone in comparison of Paris. We have had such a frost for this fortnight, that I went nine miles to dine in the country to-day, in a villa exactly like a green-house, except that there was no fire but in one room. We were four in a coach, and all our chinks stopped with furs, and yet all the glasses were frozen. We dined in a paved hall painted in fresco, with a fountain at one end; for in this country they live in perpetual opera, and persist in being young when they are old, and hot when they are frozen. At the end of the hall sat shivering three glorious maccaws, [*sic*], a vast cockatoo, and two poor parroquets, who squalled like the Children in the Wood after their nursery-fire! I am come home, and blowing my billets between every paragraph, yet can scarce move my fingers.

To John Chute, Esqr.
HORACE WALPOLE, 1717–1797

THE JOLLY BEGGARS

WHEN lyart leaves bestrow the yird
Or, wavering like the baukie bird,
  Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte
And infant frosts begin to bite,
  In hoary cranreuch drest;
Ae night at e'en a merry core
  O' randie gangrel bodies
In Poosie Nansie's held the splore,
  To drink their orra duddies.
    Wi' quaffing and laughing
    They ranted and they sang;
    Wi' jumping and thumping
      The very girdle rang.

First niest the fire in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel brae'd wi' mealy bags,
  And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm;
Wi' usquebae and blankets warm,
  She blinket in her sodger;
An' aye her gets the tosydrab
  The tither skelping kiss,
While she held up her greedy jab
  Just like an aumous dish;
    Ilk smack still did crack still
      Just like a cadger's whip;
    Then staggering and swaggering
      He roar'd this dilly up.

Poor Merry Andrew in the neuk
  Sat guzzling with a tinker hizzie;
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
  Between themselves they were sae busy.
  At length wi' drink and courting dizzy,
He stortered up an' made a face;
  Then tun'd, and laid a smack on Grizzy,
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

Then niest outspak a rache carlin
Wha kent fu' weel to click the sterling,
For mony a pursie she had hookit,
And had in mony a well been dookit,
Her love had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waipe and woodie!
We' sighs and sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle
Wha' used at trysts and fairs to driddle,
Her strappin' limb and gaucy middle
    (He reached nae higher)
Had holed his heatie like a riddle,
    And blawn't on fire.
Wi' hand on haunch, and upward ee,
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,

Then, in arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set off, wi' allegretto glee
His giga solo.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
As well as poor gut-scraper;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
And draws a roosty rapier—
He swoor, by a' was swearing worth,
To split him like a pliver,
Unless he would from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly ee, poor tweedle-dee
Upon his hunkers bended,
And pray'd for grace wi' rueful face,
And sae the quarrel ended.
But tho' his little heart did grieve
When round the tinkler prest her,
He feigned to snirtle in his sleeve,
When thus the caird addressed her:

The caird prevailed—th' unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk,
Partly wi' love o'er come so sair,
And partly she was drunk.
Sir Violono, with an air
That show'd a man of spunk,
Wish'd unison between the pair
And made the bottle clunk
To their health that night.

But urchin Cupid shot a shaft
That play'd the dame a shavie;
The fiddler rak'd his fore and aft
Behint the chicken cavie,
Her lord, a wight of Homer's craft,
Tho' limpin' wi' the spavie,
He hirpled up, and lak like daft
And shoo'd them 'Dainty Davie'
O' boot that night.

So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's
Shook with a thunder of applause,
Re-echoed from each mouth;
They toom'd their pocks, an' pawn'd their duds,
They scarcely left to c'er their fuds,
To quench their lowin' drouth.
Then owre again the jovial thrang
The poet did request
To louse his pack, an' wale a sang
A ballad o' the best;
He rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa Deborahs,
Looks round him, and found them
Impatient for the chorus.

ROBERT BURNS, 1759–1796

O WILLIE BREWED A PECK O' MAUT

WILLIE brewed a peck o' maut
And Rob and Allen came to see;
Three blyther hearts, that lie-lang night,
Ye wad na found in Christendie.

We are na fou', we're no that free,
But just a drappie in our ee;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.

Here we are met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be!

It is the moon, I ken his horn,
That's blinkin' in the lift sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,
But by my sooth! she'll wait a wee.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa',
A cuckold, coward loon is he!
Wha first beside his chair should fa',
He is the King among us three.

Idem

FIRESIDE

THE shutter closed, the lamp alight,
The faggot chopt and blazing bright—
The shepherd now, from labour free,
Dances his children on his knee;
While, underneath his master's seat,
The tired dog lies in slumbers sweet,
Starting and whimpering in his sleep,
Chasing still the straying sheep.
The cat's rolled round in vacant chair,
Or leaping children's knees to lair
—Or purring on the warmer hearth
Sweet chorus to the crickets' mirth.
The redcap, hanging over head
In cage of wire, is perch'd abed;
Slumbering in his painted feathers
Unconscious of the out-door weathers;
Ev'n things without the cottage walls
Meet comfort as the evening falls,—
As happy in the Winter's dearth
As those around the blazing hearth.
The ass (frost-driven from the moor
Where storms through naked bushes roar)
Litter'd with straw, now dozes warm,
Beneath his shed, from snow and storm;
The swine are fed and in the stye;
And fowls snug perch'd in hovel nigh,
With head in feathers safe asleep,
Where foxes cannot hope to creep;
And geese are gabbling in their dreams
Of littered corn and thawing streams—
The sparrow, too, a daily guest,
Is in the cottage eaves at rest;
And robin small, and smaller wren,
Are in their warm holes safe again
From falling snows, that winnow by
The hovels where they nightly lie.

The Shepherd's Calendar
JOHN CLARE, 1793–1864

THE COMFORT OF THE ALE HOUSE

(JANUARY)

WITHERING and keen the Winter comes,
While Comfort flies to close-shut rooms,
And sees the snow in feathers pass
Winnowing by the window-glass;
Whilst unfelt tempests howl and beat
Above his head in chimney-seat.

Now, musing o'er the changing scene,
Farmers behind the tavern-screen
Collect;—with elbow idly press'd
On hob, reclines the corner's guest,
Reading the news, to mark again
The bankrupt lists, or price of grain;

Or old Moore's annual prophecies
Of flooded fields and clouded skies;
Whose Almanac's thumb'd pages swarm
With frost and snow and many a storm,
And wisdom, gossip'd from the stars,
Of politics and bloody wars,

He shakes his head and still proceeds,
Nor doubts the truth of what he reads;
All wonders are with faith supplied,—
Bible, at once, or weather guide,
Puffing the while his red-tipt pipe,
He dreams o'er troubles nearly ripe.

Yet, not quite lost in profit's way,
He'll turn to next year's harvest-day,
And, Winter's leisure to regale,
Hope better times, and—sip his ale.

Idem

BED TIME TALES

SUPPER removed, the mother sits
And tells her tales by starts and fits.
She from her memory oft repeats
Witches' dread powers and fairy feats:
How one has oft been known to prance
In cowcribs, like a coach, to France,
And ride on sheep-trays from the fold
A race-horse speed to Burton—hold,
The children steal away to bed,
And up the ladder softly tread;
Nor speak a word! but still as sleep
They secret to their pillows creep,
And whisper o'er, in terror's way,
The prayers they dare no louder say;
Then hide their heads beneath the clothes,
And try in vain to seek repose;
While yet, to fancy's sleepless eye,
Witches on sheep-trays gallop by,
And fairies like a rising spark,
Swarm twittering round them in the dark.

Idem

A CHRISTMAS HOAX

(TO MANNING, DEC. 25, 1815)

DEAR old friend and absentee,—This is Christmas-day 1815 with us; what it may be with you I don't know, the 12th of June next year perhaps; and if it should be the consecrated season with you, I don't see how you can keep it. You have no turkeys; you would not desecrate the festival by offering up a withered Chinese bantam, instead of the savoury grand Norfolcian holocaust, that smokes all around my nostrils at this moment, from a thousand firesides. Then what puddings have you? Where will you get holly to stick in your churches, or churches to stick your dried tea-leaves (that must be the substitute) in? What memorials you can have of the holy time, I see not. A chopped missionary or two may keep up the thin idea of

Lent and the wilderness; but what standing evidence have you of the Nativity?—'tis our rosy-cheeked, homestalled divines, whose faces shine to the tune of 'Unto us a child'; faces fragrant with the mince-pies of half a century, that alone can authenticate the cheerful mystery—I feel my bowels refreshed with the holy tide—my zeal is great against the unedified heathen. Down with the Pagodas—down with the idols—Ching-chong-fo—and his foolish priesthood! Come out of Babylon, O my friend! for her time is come, and the child that is native, and the Proselyte of her gates, shall kindle and smoke together! And in sober sense what makes you so long from among us, Manning? You must not expect to see the same England again which you left.

Empires have been overturned, crowns trodden into dust, the face of the western world quite changed: your friends have all got old—those you left blooming—myself (who am one of the few that remember you) those golden hairs which you recollect my taking a pride in, turned to silvery and grey. Mary has been dead and buried many years—she desired to be buried in the silk gown you sent her. Rickman, that you remember active and strong, now walks out supported by a servant-maid and a stick. Martin Burney is a very old man. The other day an aged woman knocked at my door, and pretended to my acquaintance: it was long before I had the most distant cognition of her; but at last together we made her out to be Louisa, the daughter of Mrs. Topham, formerly Mrs. Morton, who had been Mrs. Reynolds, formerly Mrs. Kenny, whose first husband was Holcroft the dramatic writer of the last century. St. Paul's church is a heap of ruins; the Monument isn't half so high as you knew it, divers parts being successively taken down which the ravages of time had rendered dangerous; the horse at Charing Cross is gone, no one knows whither,—and all this has taken place while you have been settling whether Ho-hing-tong should be spelt with a ——, or a ——. For aught I see you had almost as well remain where you are, and not come like a Struldbrug into a world where few were born when you went away. Scarce here and there one will be able to make out your face; all your opinions will be out of date, your jokes obsolete, your puns rejected with fastidiousness as wit of the last age. Your way of mathematics has already given way to a new method, which after all is I believe the old doctrine of Maclaurin, new

vamped up with what he borrowed of the negative quantity of fluxions from Euler.

Poor Godwin! I was passing his tomb the other day in Cripplegate Church-yard. There are some verses upon it written by Miss ——, which if I thought good enough I would send you. He was one of those who would have hailed your return, not with boisterous shouts and clamours, but with the complacent gratulations of a philosopher anxious to promote knowledge as leading to happiness—but his systems and his theories are ten feet deep in Cripplegate mould. Coleridge is just dead, having lived just long enough to close the eyes of Wordsworth, who paid the debt to nature but a week or two before—poor Col., but two days before he died, he wrote to a bookseller proposing an epic poem on the 'Wanderings of Cain,' in twenty-four books. It is said that he has left behind him more than forty thousand treatises in criticism, metaphysics, and divinity, but few of them in a state of completion. They are now destined, perhaps, to wrap up spices. You see what mutations the busy hand of Time has produced, while you have consumed in foolish voluntary exile that time which might have gladdened your friends—benefitted your country; but reproaches are useless. Gather up the wretched reliques, my friend, as fast as you can, and come to your old home. I will rub my eyes and try to recognise you. We will shake withered hands together, and talk of old things—of St. Mary's church and the barber's opposite, where the young students in mathematics used to assemble. Poor Crips, that kept it afterwards, set up a fruiterer's shop in Trumpington-street, and for aught I know resides there still, for I saw the name up in the last journey I took there with my sister just before she died. I suppose you heard that I had left the India House, and gone into the Fishmongers' Almshouses over the bridge. I have a little cabin there, small and homely, but you shall be welcome to it. You like oysters, and to open them yourself; I'll get you some if you come in oyster time. Marshal, Godwin's old friend, is still alive, and talks of the faces you used to make.

Come as soon as you can.

CHARLES LAMB, 1775–1834

ZUMMER AND WINTER

When I led by zummer streams
The pride o' Lea, as naighbours thought her,
While the zun, wi' evenin' beams,
Did cast our sheädes athirt the water;
Winds a-blowèn,
Streams a-flowèn,
Skies a-glowèn;
Tokens of my jaÿ zoo fleetèn,
Heighten'd it, that happy meeten.

Then, when maid and man took pleäces,
Gaÿ in winter's Chris'mas dances,
Showèn in their merry feäces
Kindly smiles an' glisnèn glances;
Stars a-winken,
Day a-shrinken,
Sheädes a-zinken;
Brought anew the happy meetèn,
That did meäke the night too fleetèn.

W. BARNES, 1801–1886

A CHRISTMAS GHOST STORY

Miss Gryll.—We are talking about ghosts, but we have not a ghost story. I want a ghost story.

Miss Niphet.—I will try to tell you one, which I remember imperfectly. It relates, as many such stories do, to a buried treasure. An old miser had an only daughter; he denied himself everything, but he educated her well, and treated her becomingly. He had accumulated a treasure, which he designed for her, but could not bear the thought of parting with it, and died without disclosing the place of its concealment. The daughter had a lover, not absolutely poor, nor much removed from it. He farmed a little land of his own. When her father died, and she was left destitute and friendless, he married her, and they endeavoured by economy and industry to make up for the

deficiencies of fortune. The young husband had an aunt, with whom they sometimes past a day of festival, and Christmas day especially. They were returning home late at night on one of these occasions; snow was on the ground; the moon was in the first quarter, and nearly setting. Crossing a field, they paused a moment to look on the beauty of the starry sky; and when they again turned their eyes to the ground, they saw a shadow on the snow; it was too long to have any distinct outline; but no substantial form was there to throw it. The young wife clung trembling to the arm of her husband. The moon set, and the shadow disappeared. New Year's Day came, and they passed it at the aunt's. On their return the moon was full, and high in heaven. They crossed the same field, not without hesitation and fear. In the same spot as before, they again saw the shadow; it was that of a man in a large loose wrapper, and a high-peaked hat. They recognised the outline of the old miser. The husband sustained his nearly fainting wife; as their eyes were irresistibly fixed on it, it began to move, but a cloud came over the moon, and they lost sight of it. The next night was bright, and the wife had summoned all her courage to follow out the mystery; they returned to the spot at the same hour; the shadow again fell on the snow, and again it began to move, and glided away slowly over the surface of the snow. They followed it fearfully. At length it stopped on a small mound in another field of their own farm. They walked round and round it, but it moved no more. The husband entreated his wife to remain, while he sought a stick to mark the place. When she was alone, the shadow spread out its arms as in the act of benediction, and vanished. The husband found her extended on the snow; he raised her in his arms; she recovered, and they walked home. He returned in the morning with a pick-axe and spade, cleared away the snow, broke into the ground, and found a pot of gold, which was unquestionably their own. And then, with the usual end of a nurse's tale, 'they lived happily all the rest of their lives.'

T. L. PEACOCK, 1785–1866

BOILED WITH HIS OWN PLUM PUDDING

'A MERRY CHRISTMAS, uncle! God save you!' cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

'Bah!' said Scrooge, 'humbug! . . .'

'Don't be cross, uncle!' said the nephew.

'What else can I be,' returned the uncle, 'when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will,' said Scrooge, indignantly, 'every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!'

Christmas Carol
CHARLES DICKENS, 1812–1870

BOB CRATCHIT'S CHRISTMAS

SUCH a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot-plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight

arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard and stolen it while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Halloa! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry-cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovelful of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what

Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed—

'A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!'

Which all the family re-echoed.

'God bless us every one!' said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

Idem

SPORTSMAN'S WINTER

SPORTSMAN'S WINTER

		PAGE
HERO AND WHALE FISH	*Beowulf*. Translated by *Kenneth Hare*	209
AETAS AVIDA GLORIAE	*William Fitzstephen* *d.* 1190 Translated by *Kenneth Hare*	211
HOLLA! ABLOY!	*Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* (about 1360) Translated by *Kenneth Hare*	211
RAPE OF CHAUNTECLEER	*Geoffrey Chaucer*	213
THE MONK	1340–1400	215
HOW PERFECT IS THE HOUND!	*Izaak Walton*	216
THE HUNTSMAN PRAISES EARTH	1593–1683	217
THE COVERLEY HUNT		217
A HIGHLAND FOX-HUNT	*Sir Walter Scott* 1771–1832	219
THE BADGER	*John Clare* 1793–1864	221
THE STOUT-AS-STEEL HOUNDS	*R. S. Surtees* 1803–1864	222
MEDIAEVAL MOCKERY	*Robert Browning* 1812–1889	224
THE HOUNDS OF TAPESTRY	*Matthew Arnold* 1822–1888	228
SKATING		
DEXTERITY OF THE SLIDERS	*John Evelyn* 1620–1706	228
SKEATES	*Samuel Pepys* 1632–1703	229
AN ATALANTA ON ICE	*Thomas Love Peacock* 1785–1866	229
THE SWANLIKE ART	*Charles Dickens* 1812–1870	230
CURLING IN 1787	*Gentleman's Magazine*	233
SLEIGHING	*Edgar Allan Poe* 1809–1849	234

CONTRA

		PAGE
BUMPKINS AND BOOBIES	*Lord Chesterfield* 1694–1773	234
FIAT EXPERIMENTUM	*Boswell* 1740–1795	235
DR. JOHNSON AS HUNTER	*Mrs. Piozzi* 1741–1821	235
WOUNDED HARE	*Robert Burns* 1759–1796	236
GALLOPING FARMERS	*Captain Jesse* 1778–1840	236
THE CHILDLESS FATHER	*William Wordsworth* 1770–1850	237
DON JUAN HUNTS	*Byron* 1788–1824	237
THE UNSPEAKABLE AND THE UNEATABLE	*Oscar Wilde* 1856–1900	239
RECREATIONS	*Anything except Sport* *George Bernard Shaw* 1856-	239

SPORTSMAN'S WINTER

HERO AND WHALE FISH

BRAVE things, friend Unferth,
Do you, Beer-drunken,
Brag about Breca!
But Rightly as I Read it,
'Twas I proved more Sea-stout,
More Stalwart than he,
Yea Sturdier than all men
At Strife midst the Surge!
We Boasted, we twain,
Being then but in Boyhood,
Far out upon Ocean,
To Set life at Stake.
Such Compact we Cast.
To Bear his Brand Naked
Neither Neglected,
Being Wary in Wielding it
For Ward 'gainst the Whale-fish!
Not Far o'er the Brine
Floated Breca From me,
Nor From him would I.
For the Fleeting of Five nights
Kept we Fast together,
Then the Drift Drove between!
With Welter of the Waters,
Weather of the sharpest,
And the Nip o' the Night.

From the North, a Biting Blast
Blew dead against me,
Wild were the Waves.
Roused was the Rage then
Of the sea fishes, the
Ravenous loathly ones
'Gainst whom my Hand-rivetted,
Plaited, Hard, body-Harness
Afforded present Help,
Binding my Breast about,
Gilded with Gold.
One Spotty Sea-fish
To the Dark ground Dragged me,
Fierce Fastening upon me,
Grim was his Grip!
But 'twas Given me to Gall him,
To Prick with my sword Point,
To Worst with my War-blade.
Combat Carried off the
Mighty ocean Monster
Harried by my Hand!
Repeatedly the Spiteful
Shrewdly assailed me,
With my Sword Still paid I them
In Such fashion as was meet.
Wherefore they Brought me not,
Briganos! to their Banquet,
To Sit about me to Supper
On the floor of the Sea.
No! for Next morning
High and dry lay they,
Put to Sleep by the Sword
On the Wrack of the Waves.

BEOWULF
Translated by KENNETH HARE

AETAS AVIDA GLORIAE

WHEN that great marsh which washes the northern walls of the city freezes over, vast crowds of youngsters sally out to play upon the ice. They get up speed by running, place their feet wide apart, advance one side before the other, and glide, in this fashion, for a considerable distance. Others hack themselves seats from the ice, as large as great millstones, whereupon a crowd of others link hands, and running on ahead, draw the sitter, and that at such a speed that if a few lose their footing, all fall upon their faces. Some there are, more expert, who bind the shin bones of animals beneath their insteps. These providing themselves with poles furnished at their lower ends with sharp iron spikes, strike with them from time to time into the ice, and away they skim, swift as a darting bird, or the bolt from a crossbow. Sometimes two young fellows will take up positions, by agreement, at two opposite points, with poles in their hands with which mutually to thrust at one another. On these occasions either one or both come to the ground, not without bodily hurt. For even after they have fallen, owing to the speed with which they were travelling, they are flung far from one another, and if any part of a player's head rasps upon the ice, it looks as though it had been shaved clean; flayed even. And if one of the pair happen to fall upon the other, a leg or an arm will be broken. But youth greedy of glory, and passionately desirous of victory, loves thus to exercise itself in mimic warfare, so that later it may comport itself more stoutly in real battles.

WILLIAM FITZSTEPHEN, b. (?), d. 1190
Translated by KENNETH HARE

'HOLLA! ABLOY!'

WHEN they had ridden to the greenwood side,
The hounds of their long leashes free they cast.
A traverse way athwart the wood they ride,
And through the horns they blow a rousing blast.

Abloy! *a hunting cry equivalent to 'On! On!'*

A little hound that by a thorn bush past,
Shrilly gives tongue; his fellows answer back,
The huntsmen cheer, the rabble fall in fast,
Hounds swift and lithe follow the fox's track
As forth by many a difficult grove he leads the pack.

He swerves, he backs, he doubles, oft he crept
Beneath some sharp hedge, marking, far away,
How fast drew on the hunt, then quick he leap't
Over a spinney, leading them astray,
And 'scaped the forest, and had won the day
But that a beater's hut was stationed there,
Wherefrom three fierce ones ran at him all grey.
So to the woods again, poor wretch, in care,
With all the woe in life and courage of despair.

Then was it very bliss to hear the hounds
When all the pack had view of him together,—
Such outcry for his head, as, from their bounds,
The clambering cliffs had clattered all together,
No gambler on his life would stake a feather,—
Loud, loud they holloaed when they came at him,
And 'Thief! Thief!' cried, and in the greenwood's tether,
Those tattlers at his tail with eyen grim,
Hem him lest out again he dart from forest dim.

By hollow, by hill, he leads them over, under,
He muddied well that stout lord and his train,
He twists, he twines, lest he be torn asunder,
And far he flies, and sly creeps back again. . . .
. . .'Holla! Abloy!'
Through fields abroad full fast the huntsmen ride,
And through a thicket dash; the fox runs there beside.

They met him coming through a full rough grove,
With all the rabble right upon his heel.
With whip and spur forward that lord doth shove,
Draws from his scabbard his brand, about doth wheel,
Brandished and flung it: stark doth Reynard reel,
'Scaped it, and thought to start back through the crowd,
But fleeter is a hound his death to deal,
All at the horses' feet, thick as a cloud,
They worry me this cunning fellow, snarling loud.

Nimbly adown to earth that lord doth light,
And caught, and overhead bore high his prey,
Thither the nearer huntsmen speed aright,
To mark the brave hounds all aloud that bay.
Faint the recheat is sounded far away
Till gathered is that company all whole
Whose loud hallooing closes up the day,
While all that ever bare bugle blew their dole,
So merry do they raise the Mass for Reynard's soul!

They stroke their gallant hounds and fee them well,
Then turn back home, tearing off Reynard's coat,
The purple twilight gathers in the dell,
Their mighty horns they blow with lusty throat,
Full stoutly, so they come by ditch and moat,
And find a great fire on the floor agood. . . .

Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight
KENNETH HARE
Tr. original about 1360

Recheat, *here, the series of notes on the hall sounded to reassemble the party at the close of the hunt.*

a fire on the floor. *The old fires were built against a screen or 'reredos' in the centres of the great halls.*

RAPE OF CHAUNTECLEER

THIS Chauntecleer stood hye up-on his toos,
Strecching his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowe loude for the nones;
And daun Russel the fox sterte up at ones,
And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer,
And on his bak toward the wode him beer,
For yet ne was ther no man that him sewed.
O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed! . . .
Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun
Was never of ladies maad, whan Ilioun
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,

Nones, for the, *for the nonce, for this occasion.* Gargat, *throat.*
Hente, *seized.* Sewed, *pursued.*

Whan he hadde hent king Priam by the berd,
And slayn him (as saith us Eneydos),
As maden alle the hennes in the clos,
Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighte,
Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
Whan that hir housbond hadde lost his lyf, . . .
O woful hennes, right so cryden ye,
As whan that Nero brende the citee
Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves,
For that hir housbondes losten alle hir lyves; . . .
This sely widwe, and eek hir doghtres two,
Herden thise hennes crye and maken wo,
And out at dores sterten they anoon,
And syen the fox toward the grove goon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away;
And cryden, 'Out! harrow! and weylaway!
Ha, ha, the fox!' and after him they ran,
And eek with staves many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
And Malkin, with a distaf in hir hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges
So were they fered for berking of the dogges
And shouting of the men and wimmen eke,
They ronne so, hem thoughte hir herte breke. . . .
So hidous was the noyse, a! benedicite!
Certes, he Jakke Straw, and his meynee,
Ne made never shoutes half so shrille,
Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.

The Nonne Preestes Tale
GEOFFREY CHAUCER, (?) 1340–1400

Shrighte, *shrieked.*
Meynee, *crew.*
Widwe, *widow.*
Thilke, *that.*
Sely, *good, innocent or wretched*
Benedicite, (pronounced ben'cite), *bless ye (the Lord), here an expletive.*

THE MONK

A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrye,
A out-rydere, that lovede venerye;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable:
And whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here
Gingten in a whistling wynd as clere,
And eek as loude as doth the chapel-belle,
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.
The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,
This ilke monk leet olde thinges pace,
And held after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters been nat holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is cloisterlees,
Is likned til a fish that is waterlees;
That is to seyn, a monk out of his cloistre.
But thilke text held he nat worth an oistre. . . .
Therfor he was a pricasour aright;
Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel in flight;
Of priking and of hunting for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves purfiled at the houd
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And, for to festne his hood under his chin,
He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pin:
A love-knot in the gretter end ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point;

Maistry, *skill, power, superiority.* Venerye, *hunting.*
Deyntee, *dainty.* Rood, *rode.* Ther as, *where.*
Reule, *rule.* Ilke, *same.* Yaf, *gave.* Pulled, *plucked*
Waterlees, *without water.* Pricasour, *a hard rider.*
Priking, *riding.* Seigh, *saw.* Purfiled, *embroidered, fringed.*
Grys, *fur of the grey Squirrel.* dond, *land.* Festne, *fasten.*
Good-point, *cf. embonpoint.*

His eyen stepe, and rollinge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His botes souple, his hors in greet estat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelat;
He was nat pale as a for-pyned goost.
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

Idem

Eyen, *eyes.*
Leed, *cauldron, or copper.*
Forpyned, *wasted away.*
Forneys, *furnace.*
Botes, *boots.*

HOW PERFECT IS THE HOUND!

HUNTING is a game for princes and noble persons; it hath been highly prized in all ages; it was one of the qualifications that Xenophon bestowed on his Cyrus, that he was a hunter of wild beasts. Hunting trains up the younger nobility to the use of manly exercises in their riper age. What more manly exercise than hunting the Wild Boar, the Stag, the Buck, the Fox, or the Hare? How doth it preserve health, and increase strength and activity!

And for the dogs that we use, who can commend their excellency to that height which they deserve? How perfect is the hound at smelling, who never leaves or forsakes his first scent, but follows it through so many changes and varieties of other scents, even over, and in, the water, and into the earth! What music doth a pack of dogs then make to any man, whose heart and ears are so happy as to be set to the tune of such instruments! How will a right greyhound fix his eye on the best Buck in a herd, single him out, and follow him, and him only, through a whole herd of rascal game, and still know and then kill him! For my hounds, I know the language of them, and they know the language and meaning of one another, as perfectly as we know the voices of those with whom we discourse daily.

The Compleat Angler
IZAAK WALTON, 1593–1683

THE HUNTSMAN PRAISES EARTH

THE THEATRE OF HIS EXPLOITS

WELL, Sir, I will first begin with a commendation of the Earth: the earth being that element upon which I drive my pleasant, wholesome, hungry trade. The Earth is a solid, settled element; an element most universally beneficial both to man and beast; to men who have their several recreations upon it, as horse-races, hunting, sweet smells, pleasant walks: the earth feeds man, and all those several beasts that both feed him, and afford him recreation. What pleasure doth man take in hunting the stately Stag, the generous Buck, the wild Boar, the cunning Otter, the crafty Fox, and the fearful Hare. . . . How doth the Earth bring forth herbs, flowers, and fruits, both for physick and the pleasure of mankind! and above all, to me at least, the fruitful vine, of which when I drink moderately, it clears my brain, cheers my heart, and sharpens my wit. How could Cleopatra have feasted Mark Antony with eight wild Boars roasted whole at one supper; and other meat suitable, if the earth had not been a bountiful mother? . . . The earth feeds and carries those horses that carry us. If I would be prodigal of my time and your patience, what might I not say in commendations of the Earth.

Idem

THE COVERLEY HUNT

MY Friend Sir Roger has hung several parts of his House with the Trophies of his former Labours. The Walls of his great Hall are covered with the Horns of several kinds of Deer that he has killed in the Chace, which he thinks the most valuable Furniture of his House, as they afford him frequent Topicks of Discourse, and show that he has not been idle. At the lower End of the Hall is a large Otter's Skin stuffed with Hay, which his Mother ordered to be hung up in that manner, and the Knight looks upon it with great Satisfaction, because it seems he was but nine years old when his Dog killed him. A little Room adjoining to the Hall is a kind of Arsenal filled with Guns of several Sizes and Inventions, with which the Knight has made great Havock in the Woods, and destroyed many thousands of Pheasants,

Partridges and Woodcocks. His Stable Doors are patched with Noses that belonged to Foxes of the Knight's own hunting down. Sir Roger showed me one of them that for Distinction sake has a Brass Nail struck through it, which cost him about fifteen Hours riding, carried him through half a Dozen Counties, killed him a Brace of Geldings, and lost above half his Dogs. This the Knight looks upon as one of the greatest Exploits of his Life. The perverse Widow, whom I have given some Account of, was the Death of several Foxes; for Sir Roger has told me that in the Course of his Amours he patched the Western Door of his Stable. Whenever the Widow was crusty the Foxes were sure to pay for it. In Proportion as his Passion for the Widow abated and old Age came on, he left off Fox-hunting; but a Hare is not yet safe that sits within ten Miles of his House.

Sir Roger de Coverley

THE COVERLEY HUNT

THE Hare immediately threw them above a mile behind her; but I was pleased to find, that instead of running straight forwards, or in Hunters' Language, *Flying the Country*, as I was afraid she might have done, she wheeled about, and described a sort of Circle round the Hill where I had taken my Station, in such Manner as gave me a very distinct View of the Sport. I could see her first pass by, and the Dogs sometime afterwards unravelling the whole track she had made, and following her through all her Doubles. I was at the same time delighted in observing that Deference which the rest of the Pack paid to each particular Hound, according to the Character he had acquired amongst them: If they were at a Fault, and an old Hound of Reputation opened but once, he was immediately followed by the whole Cry; while a raw Dog, or one who was a noted Liar, might have yelped his Heart out, without being taken notice of.

The Hare now, after having squatted two or three times, and been put up again as often, came still nearer to the Place where she was at first started. The Dogs pursued her, and these were followed by the jolly Knight, who rode upon a white Gelding, encompassed by his Tenants and Servants, and cheering his Hounds with all the Gaiety of Five and Twenty. One of the

Sportsmen rode up to me, and told me, that he was sure the Chace was almost at end, because the old Dogs, which had hitherto lain behind, now headed the Pack. The Fellow was in the right. Our Hare took a large Field just under us followed by the full Cry *in View*. I must confess the Brightness of the Weather, the Chearfulness of every thing around me, the *Chiding* of the Hounds, which was returned upon us in a double Echo, from two neighbouring Hills, with the Hollowing of the Sportsmen, and the Sounding of the Horn, lifted my Spirits into a most lively Pleasure, which I freely indulged because it was *innocent*. If I was under any Concern, it was on account of the poor Hare, that was now quite spent, and almost within the reach of her Enemies; when the Huntsman getting forward threw down his Pole before the Dogs. They were now within eight yards of that Game which they had been pursuing for almost as many Hours; yet on the Signal before-mentioned they all made a sudden Stand, and though they continued opening as much as before, durst not once attempt to pass beyond the Pole. At the same time Sir Roger rode forward, and alighting, took up the Hare in his Arms; which he soon delivered up to one of his Servants with an Order, if she could be kept alive, to let her go in his great Orchard, where it seems he has several of these Prisoners of War, who live together in a very comfortable Captivity. I was highly pleased to see the Discipline of the Pack, and the good-nature of the Knight, who could not find in his Heart to murder a Creature that had given him so much Diversion.

Sir Roger de Coverley

A HIGHLAND FOX-HUNT

SOME dappled mists still floated along the peaks of the hills, the remains of the morning clouds, for the frost had broken up with a smart shower. Through these fleecy screens were seen a hundred little temporary streamlets, or rills, descending the sides of the mountains like silver threads. By small sheep-tracks along these steeps, over which Dinmont trotted with the most fearless confidence, they at length drew near the scene of sport, and began to see other men, both on horse and foot, making toward the place of rendezvous. Brown was puzzling himself to

conceive how a fox-chase could take place among hills, where it was barely possible for a pony, accustomed to the ground, to trot along, but where, quitting the track for half a yard's breadth, the rider might be either bogged, or precipitated down the bank. This wonder was not diminished when he came to the place of action.

They had gradually ascended very high, and now found themselves on a mountain-ridge, overhanging a glen of great depth, but extremely narrow. Here the sportsmen had collected, with an apparatus which would have shocked a member of the Pychely Hunt; for, the object being the removal of a noxious and destructive animal, as well as the pleasures of the chase, poor Reynard was allowed much less fair play than when pursued in form through an open country. The strength of his habitation, however, and the nature of the ground by which it was surrounded on all sides, supplied what was wanting in the courtesy of his pursuers. The sides of the glen were broken banks of earth, and rocks of rotten stone, which sunk sheer down to the little winding stream below, affording here and there a tuft of scathed brushwood, or a patch of furze. Along the edges of this ravine, which, as we have said, was very narrow, but of profound depth, the hunters on horse and foot ranged themselves; almost every farmer had with him at least a brace of large and fierce greyhounds, of the race of those deer-dogs which were formerly used in that country, but greatly lessened in size from being crossed with the common breed. The huntsman, a sort of provincial officer of the district, who receives a certain supply of meal, and a reward for every fox he destroys, was already at the bottom of the dell, whose echoes thundered to the chiding of two or three brace of fox-hounds. Terriers, including the whole generation of Pepper and Mustard, were also in attendance, having been sent forward under the care of a shepherd. Mongrel, whelp, and cur of low degree, filled up the burden of the chorus. The spectators on the brink of the ravine, or glen, held their greyhounds in leash in readiness to slip them at the fox, as soon as the activity of the party below should force him to abandon his cover.

The scene, though uncouth to the eye of a professed sportsman, had something in it wildly captivating. The shifting figures on the mountain ridge, having the sky for their background, appeared to move in the air. The dogs, impatient of their restraint and maddened with the baying beneath, sprung here and there,

and strained at the slips, which prevented them from joining their companions. Looking down, the view was equally striking. The thin mists were not totally dispersed in the glen, so that it was often through their gauzy medium that the eye strove to discover the motions of the hunters below. Sometimes a breath of wind made the scene visible, the blue rill glittering as it twined itself through its rude and solitary dell. They then could see the shepherds springing with fearless activity from one dangerous point to another, and cheering the dogs on the scent, the whole so diminished by depth and distance, that they looked like pigmies. Again the mists close over them, and the only signs of their continued exertions are the halloos of the men, and the clamours of the hounds, ascending as it were out of the bowels of the earth. When the fox, thus persecuted from one stronghold to another, was at length obliged to abandon his valley, and to break away for a more distant retreat, those who watched his motions from the top slipped their greyhounds, which, excelling the fox in swiftness, and equalling him in ferocity and spirit, soon brought the plunderer to his life's end.

Guy Mannering
SIR WALTER SCOTT, 1771–1832

THE BADGER

WHEN midnight comes a host of dogs and men
Go out and track the badger to his den,
And put a sack within the hole, and lie
Till the old grunting badger passes bye.
He comes and hears—they let the strongest loose.
The old fox hears the noise and drops the goose.
The poacher shoots and hurries from the cry,
And the old hare half-wounded buzzes bye.
They get a forked stick to bear him down
And clap the dogs and take him to the town,
And bait him all the day with many dogs,
And laugh and shout and fright the scampering hogs.
He runs along and bites at all he meets;
They shout and hollo down the noisy streets.

He turns about to face the loud uproar
And drives the rebels to their very door.
The frequent stone is hurled where e'er they go;
When badgers fight, then every one's a foe.
The dogs are clapt and urged to join the fray;
The badger turns and drives them all away.
Though scarcely half as big, demure and small,
He fights with dogs for bones and beats them all.
The heavy mastiff, savage in the fray,
Lies down and licks his feet and turns away.
The bulldog knows his match and waxes cold,
The badger grins and never leaves his hold.
He drives the crowd and follows at their heels
And bites them through—the drunkard swears and reels.

The frighted women take the boys away,
The blackguard laughs and hurries on the fray.
He tries to reach the woods, an awkward race,
But sticks and cudgels quickly stop the chace.
He turns agen and drives the noisy crowd
And beats the many dogs in noises loud.
He drives away and beats them every one,
And then they loose them all and set them on.
He falls as dead and kicked by boys and men,
Then starts and grins and drives the crowd agen;
Till kicked and torn and beaten out he lies
And leaves his hold and cackles, groans, and dies.

JOHN CLARE, 1793–1864

THE STOUT-AS-STEEL HOUNDS

THE scene is Wales. 'But what long ears the horses have!' exclaimed our friend Tom as they approached. . . . '*Horses!* great heavens, *they're mules!*'

The hounds were of a breed now rarely seen, save in hill or mountainous countries, being bright-coloured wiry-haired, rough-muzzled animals, combining the power, mettle, and endurance of the fox-hound with the hard-bitten pertinacity of the terrier. . . .

Down the hill reynard came pouring with his great bushy tail

whisking in the air, as much as to say, 'I don't care a copper for any of you'; and hard upon him follow Enoch, [huntsman], full tilt on his mule, with three couple of hounds, Enoch blowing his horn, and screeching like an owl for the rest.

They came pouring over one another like a waterfall.

The fox got such an impetus that he cleared the high stone wall and burn at the bottom of the hill like a greyhound, and commenced the ascent of the opposite hill with a stoutness that looked like wind and condition.

'Hooray!' cheered a party of miners, at a fire on the crags towards which he was pointing, causing him to alter his line, and run the hill side.

The hounds having once got together, there was no further call for trooping or hallooing, or blowing the horn. Away they went at a pace that showed how good was the scent, and how hopeless the attempt to follow them. . . .

'*This way! this way!*' screeched little Cashbox [Captain Cashbox, Master. A distinguished officer in the horse marines, and a 'character'] in a state of excitement bordering upon phrensy. '*This way!*' repeated he, ramming his mule down a rutty hill side, and working his arms like a telegraph. So the field rattled and clattered away in his rear, for his mule was in a good humour, and went at a pretty good bat. . . . There are few places so uncivilised as not to have roads of some sort if people could but find them out. The most accommodating one led them straight through the mountains, on the left range of which the hounds were running with a breast-high scent, to the astonishment of the goats, and sheep, and ponies, herding on the sides.

Though the devious course of old reynard, now ascending, now descending, now going straight ahead, was in their favour, still the pace was too good to allow of much halting to look. The Captain, who led the way with his telescope set, occasionally indicated, as he put it to his eye, which hounds were leading; and after they had pursued the chase in this peculiar way for some five miles, the Captain having given the foreground a good raking, proclaimed that he saw the fox himself . . . 'stealing down the hill among the sheep and cattle.'

Just then a movement among some distant dots indicated the Fox's whereabouts, and presently the hounds came pouring down upon the spot followed by a drove of ponies, who seemed to join the chase to show how soon they would be beaten off.

The field had now a perfect panoramic view of the chase, without more trouble than they would be put to at the Diorama, or any London show. A splendid sun lit up the wild mountain scenery, while a slight tinge of frost rarefied the air, bringing distant objects near, and causing the music of the hounds to fall like thunder on the scene—reverberating like Mons. Jullien's band of a hundred and twenty performers at a 'Bal Masqué.'

Presently they had the fox and all in view. . . . There he was creeping and stealing along, not at the high galloping defying pace at which he started, but coolly and collectedly, as though conscious of the work he had to do. . . .

The striving pack gained on him just as one race-horse gains on another. The fatal view at last ensued! a dodge, a snap, and a cataract of hounds as usual ended the scene.

Hawbuck Grange
ROBERT SMITH SURTEES, 1803–1864

MEDIAEVAL MOCKERY

WELL, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
  And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:
  Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
  And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
  In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it!
  What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
  How taught old painters in their pictures?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:
Here was food for our various ambitions,

As on each case, exactly stated—
To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mounting your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest work in;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk 'ohs'
And 'ahs' while he tugged on his grand-sire's trunk-hose;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on't!

XI

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, 'The Duke's part provided,
Had not the Duchess some share in the business?'
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
'When horns wind a mort and the door is at siege,
Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
In a clean ewer with a fair towelling,
Let her preside at the disembowelling.'
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;
And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,

And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
  Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
  And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
  Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled—
  With the towel ready, and the sewer
  Polishing up his oldest ewer.
  And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
  Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
  How could I keep at any vast distance?
  And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
  And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
  To learn what was held decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,

As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase—oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might have cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812–1889

THE HOUNDS OF TAPESTRY

AND in the Arras wrought you see
A stately huntsman clad in green,
And round him a fresh forest-scene.
On that clear forest knoll he stays
With his pack round him and delays.
He stares and stares with troubled face
At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,
At that bright, iron-figured door,
And those blown rushes on the floor.

The wild boor rustles in his lair;
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air;
But Lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O Hunter! and without a fear
Thy golden tassell'd bugle blow,
And through the glades thy pastime take—
For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here!
For those thou seest are unmoved;
Cold, cold as those who lived and loved
A thousand years ago.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, 1822–1888

SKATING

'DEXTERITY OF THE SLIDERS'

Dec. 1*st.*—Having seene the strange and wonderful dexterity of the sliders on the new canal in St. James's Park, perform'd before their Maties [Majesties] by divers gentlemen and others with scheets, [SKATES], after the manner of the Hollanders, with what swiftness they passe, how suddainely they stop in full carriere upon the ice, I went home by water, but not without exceeding difficultie, the Thames being frozen, greate flakes of ice incompassing our boate.

JOHN EVELYN, 1620–1706
Diary, Dec. 1st, 1662
(William Bray's Edition)

SKEATES

. . . I TO my Lord Sandwich's, to Mr. Moore, to talk a little about business; and then over the Parke (where I first in my life, it being a great frost, did see people sliding with their skeates, which is a very pretty art,) to Mr. Coventry's chamber to St. James's, where we all met to a venison pasty, and were very merry.

SAMUEL PEPYS, 1632–1703
Diary, Dec. 1, 1662
H. B. Wheatley's Edition

NOTE.—Iron skates may perhaps have been first introduced by the Dutch, but bone skates were known to London boys in the twelfth century, as to which see Fitzstephen elsewhere in this miscellany.

AN ATALANTA ON ICE

LORD CURRYFIN, on his return to land, thought it his duty first to accost Miss Gryll, who was looking on by the side of Miss Ilex. He asked her if she ever skated. She answered in the negative. . . . He then went up to Miss Niphet, and asked her the same question. She answered: 'I have skated often in our grounds at home.' 'Then why not now?' he asked. She answered: 'I have never done it before so many witnesses.' 'But what is the objection?' he asked. 'None that I know of,' she answered. 'Then,' he said, 'as I have done or left undone some things to please you, will you do this one thing to please me?'

'Certainly,' she replied: adding to herself: 'I will do anything in my power to please you.'

She equipped herself expeditiously, and started before he was well aware. She was half round the lake before he came up with her. She then took a second start, and completed the circle before he came up with her again. He saw that she was an Atalanta on ice as on turf. He placed himself by her side, slipped her arm through his, and they started together on a second round, which they completed arm-in-arm. By this time the blush-rose bloom which had so charmed him on a former occasion again mantled on her cheeks, though from a different

cause, for it was now only the glow of healthful exercise; but he could not help exclaiming, 'I see now why and with what tints the Athenians coloured their statues.'

'Is it clear,' she asked, 'they did so?'

'I have doubted it before,' he answered, 'but I am now certain that they did.'

In the meantime Miss Gryll, Miss Ilex, and the Reverend Doctor Opimian had been watching their movements from the bank.

Miss Ilex.—I have seen much graceful motion in dancing, in private society and on the Italian stage; and some in skating before to-day; but anything so graceful as that double-gliding over the ice by those two remarkably handsome young persons, I certainly never saw before.

Miss Gryll.—Lord Curryfin is unquestionably handsome, and Miss Nipher, especially with that glow on her cheeks, is as beautiful a young woman as imagination can paint. They move as if impelled by a single will. It is impossible not to admire them both.

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK, 1785–1866

THE SWANLIKE ART

'Oh, *do* skait, Mr. Winkle,' said Arabella. 'I like to see it so much.'

'Oh, it is *so* graceful,' said another young lady.

A third young lady said it was elegant, and a fourth expressed her opinion that it was 'swan-like.'

'I should be very happy, I'm sure,' said Mr. Winkle, reddening; 'but I have no skaits.'

This objection was at once overruled. Trundle had a couple of pair, and the fat boy announced that there were half-a-dozen more down stairs: whereat Mr. Winkle expressed exquisite delight, and looked exquisitely uncomfortable.

Old Wardle led the way to a pretty large sheet of ice; and the fat boy and Mr. Weller, having shovelled and swept away the snow which had fallen on it during the night, Mr. Bob Sawyer adjusted his skaits with a dexterity which to Mr. Winkle was perfectly marvellous, and described circles with his left leg, and

cut figures of eight; and inscribed upon the ice, without once stopping for breath, a great many other pleasant and astonishing devices, to the excessive satisfaction of Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, and the ladies: which reached a pitch of positive enthusiasm, when old Wardle, and Benjamin Allen, assisted by the aforesaid Bob Sawyer, performed some mystic evolutions which they called a reel.

All this time, Mr. Winkle, with his face and hands blue with the cold, had been forcing a gimlet into the soles of his feet, and putting his skaits on, with the points behind, and getting the straps into a very complicated and entangled state, with the assistance of Mr. Snodgrass, who knew rather less about skaits than a Hindoo. At length, however, with the assistance of Mr. Weller, the unfortunate skaits were firmly screwed and buckled on, and Mr. Winkle was raised to his feet.

'Now, then Sir,' said Sam, in an encouraging tone; 'off with you, and show 'em how to do it.'

'Stop, Sam, stop!' said Mr. Winkle, trembling violently, and clutching hold of Sam's arms with the grasp of a drowning man. 'How slippery it is, Sam!'

'Not a uncommon thing upon ice, Sir,' replied Mr. Weller.

'Hold up, Sir!'

This last observation of Mr. Weller's bore reference to a demonstration Mr. Winkle made at the instant, of a frantic desire to throw his feet in the air, and dash the back of his head on the ice.

'These—these—are very awkward skaits; ain't they, Sam?' inquired Mr. Winkle, staggering.

'I'm afeered there's an ockard gen'l'm'n in 'em, Sir,' replied Sam.

'Now, Winkle,' cried Mr. Pickwick, quite unconscious that there was anything the matter. 'Come; the ladies are all anxiety.'

'Yes, yes,' replied Mr. Winkle, with a ghastly smile.

'I'm coming.'

'Just a goin' to begin,' said Sam, endeavouring to disengage himself. 'Now, Sir, start off!'

'Stop an instant, Sam,' gasped Mr. Winkle, clinging most affectionately to Mr. Weller. 'I find I've got a couple of coats at home, that I don't want, Sam. You may have them, Sam.'

'Thank 'ee, Sir,' replied Mr. Weller.

'Never mind touching your hat, Sam,' said Mr. Winkle hastily. 'You needn't take your hand away, to do that: I meant to have given you five shillings this morning for a christmas box, Sam. I'll give it you this afternoon, Sam.'

'You're very good, Sir,' replied Mr. Weller.

'Just hold me at first, Sam; will you?' said Mr. Winkle. 'There —that's right. I shall soon get in the way of it, Sam. Not too fast, Sam; not too fast.'

Mr. Winkle, stooping forward with his body half doubled up, was being assisted over the ice by Mr. Weller, in a very singular and un-swan-like manner, when Mr. Pickwick most innocently shouted from the opposite bank:

'Sam!'

'Sir?' said Mr. Weller.

'Here, I want you.'

'Let go, Sir,' said Sam. 'Don't you hear the governor a callin'? Let go, Sir.'

With a violent effort, Mr. Weller disengaged himself from the grasp of the agonised Pickwickian; and, in so doing, administered a considerable impetus to the unhappy Mr. Winkle. With an accuracy which no degree of dexterity or practice could have insured, that unfortunate gentleman bore swiftly down into the centre of the reel, at the very moment when Mr. Bob Sawyer was performing a flourish of unparalleled beauty. Mr. Winkle struck wildly against him, and with a loud crash they both fell heavily down. Mr. Pickwick ran to the spot. Bob Sawyer had risen to his feet, but Mr. Winkle was far too wise to do anything of the kind, in skaits. He was seated on the ice, making spasmodic efforts to smile; but anguish was depicted on every lineament of his countenance.

'Are you hurt?' inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, with great anxiety.

'Not much,' said Mr. Winkle, rubbing his back very hard.

'I wish you'd let me bleed you,' said Mr. Benjamin, with great eagerness.

'No, thank you,' replied Mr. Winkle hurriedly.

'I really think you had better,' said Allen.

'Thank you,' replied Mr. Winkle; 'I'd rather not.'

'What do you think, Mr. Pickwick?' inquired Bob Sawyer.

Mr. Pickwick was excited and indignant. He beckoned to Mr. Weller, and said in a stern voice, 'Take his skaits off.'

'No; but really I had scarcely begun,' remonstrated Mr. Winkle.

'Take his skaits off,' repeated Mr. Pickwick firmly.

The command was not to be resisted. Mr. Winkle allowed Sam to obey it, in silence.

'Lift him up,' said Mr. Pickwick. Sam assisted him to rise. Mr. Pickwick retired a few paces apart from the by-standers; and, beckoning his friend to approach, fixed a searching look upon him, and uttered in a low, but distinct and emphatic tone, these remarkable words:

'You're a humbug, Sir.'

'A what!' said Mr. Winkle, starting.

'A humbug, Sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it. An impostor, Sir.' With these words, Mr. Pickwick turned slowly on his heel, and rejoined his friends.

Pickwick Papers
CHARLES DICKENS, 1812–1870

CURLING IN 1787

YOUR correspondent, H.D., produces as a specimen of Mr. Semple's language, 'curling on the ice' for 'sliding on it.'

Be pleased to inform him that by curling is not meant sliding, but a game which I have frequently seen in Scotland (it is unknown in England) which is played in the following manner.

The match being made a small circle is drawn on the ice from which circle the curlers stand at a considerable distance; each man is provided with a curling stone which is a large hemispherical stone with an Iron handle fixed on it, by which handle the stone is launched and glides on its flat bottom rapidly along the ice. Each party usually consists of six or seven or more men. They launch their stone alternately and, when each one has played, the four stones that lie nearest to the circle on the ice gain a point apiece. The party which first gains twenty wins the game. While a stone is running a man of the opposite party runs along on the ice before or beside it, armed with a besom and if the stone seems to move so rapidly as to be likely to overshoot the mark he sweeps away every bit of snow or dirt or other impediment which lies in the way that his adversaries' stone may

be the more likely to exceed the goal; if, on the contrary, it seems to move too slow, he suffers every obstacle to remain that it may fall short of the mark.

At this manly and active exercise the youth of one parish contend against those of another for a treat.

Gentleman's Magazine, Dec. 14, 1787

SLEIGHING

HEAR the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells!
What a word of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that over sprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a chrystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

EDGAR ALLEN POE, 1809–1849

CONTRA

BUMPKINS AND BOOBIES

THE French manner of hunting is gentlemanlike; ours is only for bumpkins and boobies. The poor beasts here, are pursued and run down by much greater beasts than themselves; and the true British foxhunter is most undoubtedly a species appropriated and peculiar to this country, which no other part of the globe produces.

Letters to his Son
PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE
EARL OF CHESTERFIELD, 1694–1773

FIAT EXPERIMENTUM

THIS was a good day. Dr. Johnson told us, at breakfast, that he rode harder at a fox chace than any body. 'The English (said he) are the only nation who ride hard a-hunting. A Frenchman goes out upon a managed horse, and capers, in the field, and no-more thinks of leaping a hedge than of mounting a breach. Lord Powerscourt laid a wager in France, that he would ride a great many miles in a certain short time. The French academicians set to work, and calculated that, from the resistance of the air it was impossible. His lordship, however, performed it.'

The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides
24 September, 1773
JAMES BOSWELL, 1740–1795

DR. JOHNSON AS HUNTER

HE certainly rode on Mr. Thrale's old hunter with a good grimness, and though he would follow the hounds fifty miles on end sometimes, would never own himself either tired or amused. 'I have now learned,' said he, 'by hunting, to perceive that it is no diversion at all, nor ever takes a man out of himself for a moment: the dogs have less sagacity than I could have prevailed on myself to suppose; and the gentlemen often call to me not to ride over them. It is very strange, and very melancholy, that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them.' He was, however, proud to be amongst the sportsmen; and I think no praise ever went so close to his heart, as when Mr. Hamilton called out one day upon Brighthelmstone Downs, 'Why, Johnson rides as well, for aught I see, as the most illiterate fellow in England.'

Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson (1709–1784)
MRS. PIOZZI, 1741–1821

WOUNDED HARE

WHICH A FELLOW HAD JUST SHOT AT

INHUMAN man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye;
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh!
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go, live poor wanderer of the wood and field!
The bitter little that of life remains:
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Oft as by winding Nith, I, musing wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn;
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.

ROBERT BURNS, 1759–1796

GALLOPING FARMERS

THOUGH Brummell was so much at Belvoir, and kept a stud of horses there, he was never a 'Melton man'; and his friends, as well as every one else, were amazingly astonished when he joined in the pleasures of the chase; for, like many other gentlemen, he did not like it: it did not suit his habits, and his servant could never get him up in time to join the hounds, if it was a distant meet: but even if the meet was near, and they found quickly, he only rode a few fields, and then shaped his course in an opposite direction, or paid a visit to the nearest farm-house, to satisfy his enormous appetite for bread and cheese. I have heard him, but many years after, laugh amazingly over these incidents of his Melton days, and say in his usual droll way, that he 'could not bear to have his tops and leathers splashed by the greasy galloping farmers.'

CAPTAIN JESSE, 1778–1840

THE CHILDLESS FATHER

'Up, Timothy, up with your staff and away!
Not a soul in the village this morning will stay;
The hare has just started from Hamilton's grounds,
And Skiddaw is glad with the cry of the hounds.'

—Of coats and of jackets grey, scarlet, and green,
On the slopes of the pastures all colours were seen;
With their comely blue aprons, and caps white as snow,
The girls on the hills made a holiday show.

Fresh sprigs of green boxwood, not six months before,
Fill the funeral basin at Timothy's door;
A coffin through Timothy's threshold had passed;
One child did it bear, and that child was his last.

Now fast up the dell came the noise and the fray,
The horse and the horn, and the 'hark! hark away!'
Old Timothy took up his staff, and he shut,
With a leisurely motion the door of his hut.

Perhaps to himself at that moment he said,
'The key I must take, for my Helen is dead.'
But of this in my ears not a word did he speak,
And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770–1850

DON JUAN HUNTS

A FOX-HUNT to a foreigner is strange;
'Tis also subject to the double danger
Of tumbling first, and having in exchange
Some pleasant jesting at the awkward stranger;
But Juan had been early taught to range
The wilds, as doth an Arab turn'd avenger,
So that his horse, or charger, hunter, hack,
Knew that he had a hunter on his back.

And now in this new field with some applause,
He clear'd hedge, ditch, and double post, and rail,
And never craned, and made but few *faux pas*,
And only fretted when the scent 'gan fail.
He broke, 'tis true, some statutes of the laws
Of hunting—for the sagest youth is frail;
Rode o'er the hounds, it may be, now and then,
And once o'er several country gentlemen.

But, on the whole, to general admiration
He acquitted both himself and horse: the squires
Marvell'd at merit of another nation;
The boors cried, 'Dang it! who'd have thought it?' Sires,
The Nestors of the sporting generation,
Swore praises, and recall'd their former fires;
The huntsman's self relented to a grin,
And rated him almost a whipper-in.

Such were his trophies;—not of spear and shield,
But leaps, and bursts, and sometimes foxes' brushes;
Yet I must own,—although in this I yield
To patriot sympathy a Briton's blushes,—
He thought at heart like courtly Chesterfield,
Who, after a long chase o'er hills, dales, bushes,
And what not, though he rode beyond all price,
Ask'd next day, 'if men ever hunted *twice*?'

He also had a quality uncommon
To early risers after a long chase,
Who wake in winter ere the cock can summon
December's drowsy day to his dull race,—
A quality agreeable to a woman,
When her soft, liquid words run on apace,
Who likes a listener, whether saint or sinner,—
He did not fall asleep just after dinner.

Don Juan, Canto XIV
LORD BYRON, 1788–1824

THE UNSPEAKABLE AND THE UNEATABLE

Lady Caroline.—I am not at all in favour of amusements for the poor, Jane. Blankets and coals are sufficient. There is too much love of pleasure amongst the upper classes as it is. Health is what we want in modern life. The tone is not healthy, not healthy at all. . . .

Mrs. Allonby.—Horrid word 'health.'

Lord Illingworth.—Silliest word in our language. and one knows so well the popular idea of health. The English country gentleman galloping after a fox—the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable.

A Woman of no Importance, Act I
OSCAR WILDE, 1856–1900

RECREATIONS

Recreation: anything except sport.

Who's who, 1929
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, 1856–

THE POET'S WINTER

THE POET'S WINTER

You shining company! there waits without
the quiet rooms of heaven in the snow
one who distraught by equal love and doubt
now seeks to enter, and now turns to go.

He has heard you speaking gently from afar,
and was drawn hither sweetly against his will,
but scarce can see the window for the star,
set like a lamp upon the window-sill.

Nor is it actual snow, though banked and driven
against your door that holds him from the latch,
but deeper drifts to music heaped in heaven
than foot can measure or than time dare snatch.

Yet though benighted, wandered, and in storm,
no need to bid him for an alms to enter,
who walks in the mere shadow of song as warm
as a lamb folded in a poet's winter.

THE POET'S WINTER

			PAGE
SHAKESPEARE'S WINTER			247
Blow, blow, thou Winter Wind		*William Shakespeare*	247
When Icicles		1564–1616	248
A Woful Time			248
Lear on the Heath			249
Sonnet VIII			251
Sonnet XII			251
THE SWALLOW	Translated by *Helen Waddell*	*Radbod. Died* 917	252
TO ALDHELM	Translated by *Helen Waddell*	*A Scholar of Malmesbury*	253
TEMPLE OF MARS		*Chaucer* ?–1400	254
AND AFTER WINTER		*Edmund Spenser* 1552–1599	254
WINTER IN SIGHT		*Thomas Nash*	255
SHORT DAYS, SHARP DAYS		1564–1601	256
A PALINODE		*Edmund Bolton Sixteenth Century*	256
THE SHEEPHEARD DAMON'S PASSION		*Thomas Lodge* 1593	257
ANTONIO AND MELLIDA—PROLOGUE		*John Marston Sixteenth Century*	258
NOW WINTER NIGHTS ENLARGE		*Thomas Campion*	258
WALY WALY		*Anon*	259
FROZEN HELL		*John Milton* 1608–1674	260
THOSE FRORE SHALLOWS		*Dante*, 1265–1321 Translated by *Henry Carey*	260
THE NEW YEAR		*Charles Cotton* 1630–1687	261
SHOWER IN THE CITY		*Jonathan Swift* 1667–1745	263
A FALL OF SNOW		*J. Thomson* 1700–1748	264
AN ODE TO WINTER		*Samuel Johnson*	265
THE WINTER WALK		1709–1784	266
TO WINTER		*William Blake* 1759–1827	266

		PAGE
WORDSWORTH'S WINTER		267
The Bird's Nest filled with Snow	*William Wordsworth*	267
Wordsworth's Boyhood	1770–1850	267
To a Snowdrop		269
November 1		269
TO A FIELD MOUSE	*Robert Burns* 1759–1796	269
DEVIL'S YULE	*S. T. Coleridge*	271
THE ONE RED LEAF	1772–1834	271
LATE LEAVES	*W. S. Landor* 1775–1864	272
SHELLEY'S WINTER		272
A Song	*P. B. Shelley*	272
The Zucca	1792–1822	273
Winter		273
The Opening Year		273
A Calm Winter's Night		274
KEATS' WINTER		275
The Eve of St. Agnes	*John Keats*	275
La Belle Dame Sans Merci	1795–1821	275
Drear-Nighted December		277
Lone Winter Evening		277
NOVEMBER	*John Clare*	278
THE WINTER'S COME	1793–1864	280
IN MEMORIAM	*Tennyson* 1809–1892	281
BROWNING'S WINTER		281
Love	*Robert Browning*	281
Porphyria's Lover	1812–1889	282
By the Fireside		283
Prospice		292
LA NUIT DE DECEMBRE	*de Musset* 1810–1857	293
SYMPHONIE EN BLANC MAJEUR	*Théophile Gautier* 1811–1872	296
WINTER	*Coventry Patmore* 1823–1896	298
ODE TO THE N.E. WIND	*Charles Kingsley* 1819–1875	300
THAT WIND	*Emily Brontë* 1818–1848	301
MEREDITH'S WINTER		302
Modern Love—XVI	*George Meredith*	302
XXIII	1828–1909	302
XLVII		303
The Thrush in February		304

		PAGE
CHANSON D'AUTOMNE	*Paul Verlaine*	308
COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL	1844–1896	309
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S WINTER		309
Picture Books in Winter	*R. L. Stevenson*	309
Winter	1850–1894	310
To S. R. Crockett		311
LOVE IN WINTER	*Austin Dobson*	311
THE WANDERER	1840–1921	312
THE END OF THE WORLD		312
Statius	Translated by *Professor H. W. Garrod*	312
Lucan	Translated by *Jabez Hughes*	313
The End of the World	*Gordon Bottomley* 1874–	314

THE POET'S WINTER

SHAKESPEARE'S WINTER

INGRATITUDE

BLOW, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
    As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
    Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
    Then, heigh ho! the holly!
    This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
    As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
    As friend remembered not.

Heigh ho! sing heigh ho! etc.

As You Like It, Act II. Sc. 7
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1564–1616

WINTER

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl
Tu-who;
Tu-whit, tu-who—a merry note.
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-who;
Tu-whit, tu-who—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Love's Labour Lost, Act V. Sc. 2

Idem

A WOFUL TIME

Lenox. The night has been unruly: where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamenting's heard i' the air; strange screams of death,
And prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
New hatch'd to the woful time. The obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth
Was feverous, and did shake.
Macbeth. 'Twas a rough night.
Lenox. My young remembrance cannot parallel
A fellow to it.

Macbeth, Act II. Sc. 3

Idem

LEAR ON THE HEATH

Lear. Blow, wind, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt couriers to oak-cleaving thunder-bolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once,
That make ingrateful man!

Fool. O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is
better than this rain-water out o' door:
Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters'
blessing; here's a night pities neither
wise men nor fools.

Lear. Rumble thy belly full! Spit, fire! spout rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness,
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription; why then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man:—
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!

Fool. He that has a house to put his head in, has
a good head-piece. . . .

Lear. No, I will be the pattern of all patience, I will
say nothing.

Kent. Who's there?

Fool. Marry, here's grace, and a cod-piece; that's a
wise man, and a fool.

Kent. Alas, sir, are you here? things that love night,
Love not such nights as these; the wrathful skies
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves: Since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never

Remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry
The affliction, nor the fear.

Lear. Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice: Hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjur'd, and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous: Caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming,
Hast practis'd on man's life!—Close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.—I am a man,
More sinn'd against, than sinning.

Kent. Here is the place, my lord: good my lord, enter:
The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure. [*Storm still.*

Lear. Let me alone.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Wilt break my heart?

Kent. I had rather break my own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin; so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'ldst shun a bear,
But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea
Thou'ldst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's free
The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what bears there. Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home.
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.
In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave you all,
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease:

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.
[*To the Fool.*] In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty,
Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.
[*Fool goes in.*
Poor naked wretches, where soe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.

King Lear, Act III. Sc. 2
Idem

VIII

THAT time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold—
Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after Sunset fadeth in the West,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Sonnets
Idem

XII

How like a Winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen,
What old December's bareness everywhere!

And yet this time removed was summer's time;
The teeming Autumn, big with rich increase,
Bearing the wanton burden of the prime
Like widow'd wombs after their Lord's decease:
Yet this abundant issue seem'd to me
But hope of orphans and unfather'd fruit;
For Summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
And, thou away, the very birds are mute:
Or if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer
That leaves look pale, dreading the Winter's near.

Idem

THE SWALLOW

I TAKE the winds flower-bringing,
I take the time of leaves,
And tarry in men's houses,
Building beneath the eaves.

My nest where all can see it;
And there I keep my young,
My brood so sweet and little,
Until their time is come.

Out in the empty spaces
They follow me away,
Swift are my wings and tireless
All the long summer day.

And up in those high places
My flight is not in vain,
For kindly laughs the joyous sun
On fields of standing grain.

But when in the dank marshes
I dip a flying wing,
Then through the fields comes flailing
The east wind harsh with rain.

Colder the sun, and winter,
Bitter with snow at hand.
Out-driven or out-flying,
I leave my fatherland.

Sweet nests and kindly threshold,
  Unheeding leave behind,
And my own fate I follow,
  Far from the frozen wind.

Beneath strange roofs I shelter.
  O man, wilt thou not see?
I follow fate: why wilt thou
  Lag after destiny?

RADBOD
Nephew of the Archbishop of Cologne
Translated by HELEN WADDELL

TO ALDHELM

STORM and destruction shattering
  Strike fear upon the world,
The winds are out, and through high heaven
  Their Bacchanals are hurled.
Their league is broken, burst the girth,
And launched their fury on the earth.

Torrent on torrent falls the rain,
  Dark are the lovely Pleiades,
Their seven lamps are out, and dark
  The Houses where abide the stars.
And Sirius shines no more at all,
And Heaven is hung with blackest pall.

Yet through the summits of the sky
  Flashes afar the livid levin,
And cataracts of pallid fire
  Pour from the toppling crests of heaven.
Struggling with clouds the mountains stand,
The dark sea masses on the strand,
Following wave on wave behind
The rush and ruin of the wind.

A Scholar of Malmesbury
Eighth Century
Translated by HELEN WADDELL

TEMPLE OF MARS

WHY sholde I noght as wel eek telle you al
The porterature that was upon the wal
Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the ride?
Al peynted was the wal, in length and bride,
Lyk to the estres of the grisly place
That Lighte the grete temple of Mares in Thrace.
In thilke coldé, frosty regioun
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.
First, on the wal was peynted a forest,
In which ther dwelleth neither man nor best,
With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde
Of stubbis sharpe and hidouse to beholde,
In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough,
As though a storm should cristen every bough;
And downward from an hille, under a bente
There stood the temple of Mars army-potente,
Wroght al of burned steel, of which entree
Was long and streght and gastly for to see;
And ther out came a rage and such a size
That it made all the Gates for to rise.
The Northren lyght in at the dore's shoon.

CHAUCER, ?–1400

AND AFTER WINTER

AND thus of all my harvest-hope I have
Nought reaped but a weedy crop of care,
Which when I thought have thresh'd in swelling sheave,
Cockel for corn, and chaff for barly, bare:
Soon as the chaff should in the fan be fin'd,
All blown away was of the wavering wind.

So now my year draws to my latter term,
My Spring is spent, my Sommer burnt up quite:
My harvest hastes to stir up Winter stern,
And bids him claim with rigorous rage his right:
So now he storms with many a sturdy stour;
So now his blustring blast each coast doth scour.

stour, *a storm, especially a driving storm.*

THE POET'S WINTER

The careful cold hath nipt my rugged rind,
And in my face deep furrows eld hath plight;
My head besprent with hoary frost I find,
And by mine eye the crow his claw doth wright:
Delight is laid abed, and pleasure past;
No sun now shines, clouds have all over-cast.

Now leave, you shepherds' Boys, your merry glee,
My Muse is hoarse and weary of this stound;
Here will I hang my pipe upon this tree,
Was never pipe of reed did better sound:
Winter is come, that blows the bitter blast,
And after winter drery death doth haste.

Gather together ye my little flock,
My little flock, that was to me most lief;
Let me, ah! let me in your folds ye lock,
E'er the breme winter breed your greater grief.
Winter is come, that blows the baleful breath,
And after winter cometh timely death. . . .

The Shepherd's Calendar. December
(Bell's Edition)
EDMUND SPENSER, (?)1552–1599

lief, *pleasant, agreeable.* breme, *fierce, rough, stormy.*

WINTER IN SIGHT

FAIR summer droops, droop men and beasts therefore,
So fair a summer look for never more:
All good things vanish less than in a day,
Peace, plenty, pleasure, suddenly decay.
Go not yet away, bright soul of the sad year,
The earth is hell when thou leavest to appear.

What, shall those flowers that decked thy garland erst,
Upon thy grave be wastefully dispersed?
O trees consume your sap in sorrow's source,
Streams turn to tears your tributary course.
Go not yet hence, bright soul of the sad year,
The earth is hell when thou leavest to appear.

Summer's Last Will and Testament
THOMAS NASH, 1564–(?)1601

SHORT DAYS, SHARP DAYS

AUTUMN hath all the summer's fruitful treasure;
Gone is our sport, fled is our Croydon's pleasure!
Short days, sharp days, long nights come on apace:
Ah, who shall hide us from the winter's face?
Cold doth increase, the sickness will not cease,
And here we lie, God knows, with little ease.
From winter, plague and pestilence, good Lord deliver us!

London doth mourn, Lambeth is quite forlorn!
Trades cry, woe worth that ever they were born!
The want of term is town and city's harm;[1]
Close chambers we do want to keep us warm.
Long banishéd must we live from our friends:
This low-built house will bring us to our ends.
From winter, plague and pestilence, good Lord deliver us.

Idem

A PALINODE

As withereth the Primrose by the river,
As fadeth Sommers-sunne from gliding fountaines;
As vanisheth the light blowne bubble ever,
As melteth snow upon the mossie Mountaines.
So melts, so vanisheth, so fades, so withers,
The Rose, the shine, the bubble and the snow,
Of praise, pompe, glorie, joy (which short life gathers,)
Faire praise, vaine pompe, sweet glorie, brittle joy.
The withered Primrose by the mourning river,
The faded Sommers-sunne from weeping fountaines:
The light blowne bubble, vanished for ever,
The molten snow upon the naked mountaines,
Are Emblems that the treasures we up-lay,
Soon wither, vanish, fade and melt away.

[1]In 1598, in consequence of the plague, Michaelmas Term was held at St. Alban's instead of in London.

THE POET'S WINTER

For as the snowe, whose lawne did over-spread
Th' ambitious hills, which Giant-like did threat
To pierce the heaven with theyr aspiring head,
Naked and bare doth leave their craggie seate.
When as the bubble, which did emptie flie
The dalliance of the undiscerned winde:
On whose calme rowling waves it did relie,
Hath shipwreck made, where it did daliance find:
And when the Sun-shine which dissolv'd the snow,
Cullourd the bubble with a pleasant varie,
And made the rath and timely Primrose grow,
Swarth clowdes with-drawne (which longer time doe tari)
Oh what is praise, pompe, glory, joy but so
As shine by fountaines, bubbles, flowers or snow?

EDMUND BOLTON
Sixteenth Century

THE SHEEPHEARD DAMON'S PASSION

Ah trees, why fall your leaves so fast?
Ah Rocks, where are your roabes of mosse?
Ah Flocks, why stand ye all agast?
Trees? Rocks, and Flocks, what, are ye pensive for my losse?

The birds me thinks tune naught but moane,
The winds breath naught but bitter plaint:
The beasts forsake their dennes to groane,
Birds, winds and beasts, what, dooth my losse your powers attaint?

Floods weepe their springs above their bounds,
And Eccho wailes so see my woe:
The roabe of roothe dooth cloathe the grounds,
Follds, Eccho, grounds, why doo ye all these tears bestow?

The trees, the Rocks and Flocks replie,
The birds, the winds, the beasts report:
Floods, Eccho, grounds for sorrow crie,
We greeve since Phillis nill kinds Damons love consort.

THOMAS LODGE, 1593

ANTONIO AND MELLIDA—PROLOGUE

THE rawish dank of clumsy winter ramps
The fluent summer's vein; and drizzling sleet
Chilleth the wan, bleak cheek of the numbed earth
While snarling gusts nibble the juiceless leaves
From the naked shudd'ring branch, and peels the skin
From off the soft and delicate aspect.

JOHN MARSTON
Sixteenth Century

NOW WINTER NIGHTS ENLARGE

Now winter nights enlarge
  The number of their hours;
And clouds their storm discharge
  Upon the airy towers.
Let now the chimneys blaze
  And cups o'erflow with wine,
Let well-tuned words amaze
  With harmony divine!
Now yellow waxen lights
  Shall wait on honey love
While youthful revels, masques, and Courtly sights,
  Sleep's leaden spells remove.

This time doth well dispense
  With lovers' long discourse;
Much speech hath some defence,
  Though beauty no remorse.
All do not all things well;
  Some measures comely tread
Some knotted riddles tell,
  Some poems smoothly read.
The summer hath his joys,
  And winter his delights,
Though love and all his pleasures are but toys,
  They shorten tedious nights.

THOMAS CAMPION, ?–1617

WALY, WALY

O WALY, waly, up the bank,
And waly, waly, doun the brae,
And waly, waly, yon burn-side,
Where I and my Love wont to gae!
I lean'd my back unto an aik,
I thocht it was a trustie tree;
But first it bow'd and syne it brak—
Sae my true love did lichtlie me.

O waly, waly, gin love be bonnie
A little time while it is new!
But when 'tis auld it waxeth cauld,
And fades awa' like morning dew.
O wherefore should I busk my heid,
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
For my true Love has me forsook,
And says he'll never lo'e me mair.

Now Arthur's Seat sall be my bed,
The sheets sall ne'er be 'filed by me;
Saint Anton's well sall be my drink;
Since my true Love has forsaken me.
Marti'mas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaves aff the tree?
O gentle Death, when wilt thou come?
For of my life I am wearie.

'Tis not the frost, that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie,
'Tis not sic cauld that makes me cry;
But my Love's heart grown cauld to me.
When we cam in by Glasgow toun,
We were a comely sicht to see;
My Love was clad in the black velvèt
And I myself in cramasie.

But had I wist, before I kist,
That love had been sae ill to win,
I had lock'd my heart in a case o' gowd,
And pinn'd it wi' a siller pin.

cramasie, *crimson.*

And O! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee;
And I mysel were dead and gane,
And the green grass growing over me!

ANONYMOUS

FROZEN HELL

BEYOND this flood and frozen Continent
Lies dark and wilde, beat with perpetual storms
Of Whirlwind and dire Hail, which on firm land
Thaws not, but gathers heap, and ruin seems
Of ancient pile; all else deep snow and ice,
A gulf profound as that Serbonian Bog
Betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius old,
Where armies whole have sunk: the parching Air
Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of Fire.
Thither by harpy-footed Furies hail'd,
At certain revolutions all the damn'd
Are brought, and feel by turns the bitter change
Of fierce extreams, extreams by change more fierce,
From beds of raging Fire to starve on Ice.
Their soft Ethereal warmth, and there to pine
Immovable, imfixt, and frozen round,
Periods of time, thence hurried back to Fire.

JOHN MILTON, 1608–1674

THOSE FRORE SHALLOWS[1]

OH ill-starr'd folk,
Beyond all others wretched! who abide
In such a mansion, as scarce thought finds words
To speak of, better had ye here on earth
Been flocks or mountain goats. As down we stood
In the dark pit beneath the giants' feet,
But lower far than they, and I did gaze
Still on the lofty battlement, a voice
Bespake me thus: 'Look how thou walkest. Take

[1]Hell, Canto XXXII.

Good heed, thy soles do tread not on the heads
Of thy poor brethren.' Thereupon I turn'd,
And saw before and underneath my feet
A lake, whose frozen surface liker seem'd
To glass than water. Not so thick a veil
In winter e'er hath Austrian Danube spread
O'er his still course, nor Tanais far remote
Under the chilling sky. Roll'd o'er that mass
Had Tabernich or Pietrapana[1] fallen,
Not e'en its rim had creak'd. As peeps the frog
Croaking above the wave, what time in dreams
The village gleaner oft pursues her toil,
So to where modest shame appears,[2] thus low
Blue pinch'd and shrined in ice the spirits stood,
Moving their teeth in shrill note like the stork.
His face each downward held; their mouth the cold,
Their eyes express'd the dolour of their heart.
. . . . . A thousand visages
Then mark'd I, which the keen and eager cold
Had shaped into a doggish grin; whence creeps
A shivering horror o'er me, at the thought
Of those frore shallows.

DANTE ALIGHIERI, 1265–1321
Translated by HENRY FRANCIS CAREY

THE NEW YEAR

HARK! the cock crows, and yon bright star
Tells us the day himself's not far;
And see! where, breaking from the night,
He gilds the western hills with light.
With him old Janus doth appear,
Peeping into the future year,
With such a look as seems to say
The prospect is not good that way.
Thus do we rise, ill sights to see,
And 'gainst ourselves to prophesy;

[1]Tabernich or Pietrapana. The one a mountain in Sclavonia, the other in that tract of country called the Garfagnana, not far from Lucca.

[2]'To where modest shame appears,' 'As high as to the face.'

When the prophetic fear of things
A more tormenting mischief brings,
More full of soul-tormenting gall
Than direst mischiefs can befall.
But stay! but stay! methinks my sight
Better informed by clearer light,
Discerns sereneness in that brow,
That all contracted seemed but now.
His reversed face may show distaste,
And frown upon the ills are past;
But that which this way looke is clear,
And smiles upon the new-born year.
He looks, too, from a place so high,
The year lies open to his eye;
And all the moments open are
To the exact discoverer.
Yet more and more he smiles upon
The happy revolution.
Why should we then suspect or fear
The influences of a year,
So smiles upon us the first morn,
And speaks us good as soon as born!
Plague on't! the last was ill enough,
This cannot but make better proof;
Or, at the worst, as we brushed through
The last, why so we may this too;
And then the next in reason should
Be super-excellently good:
For the worst ills, we daily see,
Have no more perpetuity
Than the best fortunes that do fall;
Which also brings us wherewithal
Longer their being to support,
Than those do of the other sort:
And who has one good year in three,
And yet repines at destiny,
Appears ungrateful in the case,
And merits not the good he has.
Then let us welcome the new guest
With lusty brimmers of the best:
Mirth always should good fortune meet,

And renders e'en disaster sweet;
And though the princess turn her back,
Let us but line ourselves with sack,
We better shall by far hold out
Till the next year she face about.

CHARLES COTTON, 1630–1687

SHOWER IN THE CITY

CAREFUL observers may foretell the hour
(By sure prognostics) when to dread a shower,
While rain depends, the pensive cat gives o'er
Her frolics and pursues her tail no more. . . .
If you be wise, then go not far to dine;
You'll spend in coach-hire more than save in wine.
Sauntering in coffee house is Dulman seen;
He damns the climate, and complains of spleen.
Now in contiguous drops the flood comes down,
Threatening with deluge this *devoted* town.
To shops in crowds the daggled females fly,
Pretend to cheapen goods, but nothing buy.
The Templar spruce, while every spout's abroach,
Stays till 'tis fair, yet seems to call a coach.
The tuck'd up sempstress walks with hasty strides,
While streams run down her oil'd umbrella's sides.
Here various kinds, by various fortunes led,
Commence acquaintance underneath a shed,
Triumphant Tories, and desponding Whigs,
Forget their feuds and join to save their wigs,
Box'd in a chair the Beau impatient sits,
While spouts run clattering o'er the roof by fits,
And ever and anon with frightful din
The leather sounds; he trembles from within.
So when Troy chairmen bore the wooden steed,
Pregnant with Greeks impatient to be freed,
(Those bully Greeks, who, as the moderns do,
Instead of paying chairmen ran them through).
Now from all parts the swelling Kennels flow
And bear their trophies with them as they go;

Filth of all hues and odour seem to tell
What street they sail'd from, by their sight and smell.
They, as each torrent drives, with rapid force,
From Smithfield to St. Pulchre's shape their course,
And, in huge confluence join'd at Snow-hill ridge,
Fall from the conduit prone to Holborn bridge,
Sweeping, from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood;
Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,
Dead cats and turnip tops come tumbling down the flood.

JONATHAN SWIFT, 1667–1745

A FALL OF SNOW

Low the woods
bow their hoar heads; and, ere the languid sun
faint from the west emits his evening ray,
earth's universal face, deep hid and chill,
is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
the works of man. Drooping, the labourer-ox
stands covered o'er with snow, and then demands
the fruit of all his toil. The fowls of heaven,
tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
the winnowing store, and claim the little boon
which Providence assigns them. One alone,
the red-breast, sacred to the household gods,
wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,
in joyless fields and thorny thickets, leaves
his shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
his annual visit. Half afraid, he first,
against the window beats; then brisk alights
on the warm hearth; then hopping o'er the floor,
eyes all the smiling family askance,
and pecks and starts and wonders where he is;
till more familiar grown, the table crumbs
attract his slender feet. The foodless wilds
pour forth their brown inhabitants. The hare,
though timorous of heart, and hard beset
by death in various forms, dark snares and dogs
and more unpitying men, the garden seeks,

urged on by fearless want. The bleating kind
eye the bleak heaven, and next the glistening earth,
with looks of dumb despair; then, sad dispersed,
dig for the withered herbs through heaps of snow.

J. THOMSON, 1700–1748

AN ODE TO WINTER

No more the morn, with tepid rays
  unfolds the flower of various hue;
noon spreads no more the genial blaze,
  nor gentle eve distils the dew.

The lingering hours prolong the night,
  usurping darkness shares the day;
her mists restrain the force of light,
  and Phœbus holds a doubtful sway.

By gloomy twilight half revealed,
  with sighs we view the hoary hill,
the leafless wood, the naked field,
  the snow-topt cot, the frozen rill.

No music warbles through the grove,
  no vivid colours paint the plain;
no more with devious steps I rove
  through verdant paths, now sought in vain.

Aloud the driving tempest roars;
  congeal'd impetuous showers descend:
haste, close the window, bar the doors,
  fate leaves me Stella, and a friend.

In nature's aid let art supply
  with light and heat my little sphere;
rouse, rouse the fire, and pile it high;
  light up a constellation here.

Let music sound the voice of joy!
  or mirth repeat the jocund tale;
let love his wanton wiles employ,
  and o'er the season wine prevail.

Yet time life's dreary winter brings,
  when mirth's gay tale shall please no more;
nor music charm, though Stella sings;
  nor love, nor wine, the spring restore.

Catch then, O catch the transient hour,
  improve each moment as it flies:
life's a short summer,—man a flower,
  he dies—alas! how soon he dies!

SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1709–1784

THE WINTER WALK

BEHOLD, my fair, where'er we rove,
  What dreary prospects round us rise;
The naked hill, the leafless grove,
  The hoary ground, the frowning skies!
Nor only through the wasted plain,
  Stern Winter! is thy force confess'd;
Still wider spreads thy horrid reign,
  I feel thy power usurp my breast.
Enlivening hope, and fond desire,
  Resign the heart to spleen and care;
Scarce frighted Love maintains her fire,
  And rapture saddens to despair.
In groundless hope, and causeless fear,
  Unhappy man! behold thy doom;
Still changing with the changeful year,
  The slave of sunshine and of gloom.
Tir'd with vain joys, and false alarms,
  With mental and corporeal strife,
Snatch me, my Stella, to thy arms,
  And hide me from the sight of life.

Idem

TO WINTER

'O WINTER! bar thine adamantine doors;
The north is thine; there hast thou built thy dark
Deep-founded habitation. Shake not thy roofs
Nor bend thy pillars with thine iron car.'

He hears me not, but o'er the yawning deep
Rides heavy; his storms are unchain'd, sheathèd
In ribbèd steel; I dare not lift mine eyes
For he hath rear'd his sceptre o'er the world.
Lo! now the direful monster, whose skin clings
To his strong bones, strides o'er the groaning rocks;
He withers all in silence, and in his hand
Unclothes the earth, and freezes up frail life
He takes his seat upon the cliffs—the mariner
Cries in vain. Poor little wretch thou deal'st
With storms! till heaven smiles and the monster
Is driv'n yelling to his cave beneath Mount Hecla.

WILLIAM BLAKE, 1759–1827

WORDSWORTH'S WINTER

THE BIRD'S NEST FILLED WITH SNOW

WHY art thou silent! Is thy love a plant
  Of such weak fibre that the treacherous air
  Of absence withers what was once so fair?
  Is there no debt to pay, no boon to grant?
Yet have my thoughts for thee been vigilant—
  Bound to thy service with unceasing care,
  The mind's least generous wish a mendicant
  For nought but what thy happiness could spare.
Speak—though this soft warm heart, once free to hold
  A thousand tender pleasures, thine and mine,
  Be left more desolate, more dreary cold
Than a forsaken bird's-nest filled with snow
  'Mid its own bush of leafless eglantine—
  Speak, that my torturing doubts their end may know.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770–1850

WORDSWORTH'S BOYHOOD

AND in the frosty season, when the sun
was set, and visible for many a mile
the cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time

it was indeed for all of us—for me
it was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
the village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
proud and exulting like an untired horse
that cares not for his home. All shod with steel
we hissed along the polished ice in games
confederate, imitative of the chase
and woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
the pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
and not a voice was idle: with the din
smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
the leafless trees and every icy crag
tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
into the tumult sent an alien sound
of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
the orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
into a silent bay, or sportively
glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
to cut across the reflex of a star
that fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
upon the glassy plain: and oftentimes,
when we had given our bodies to the wind,
and all the shadowy banks on either side
came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
the rapid line of motion, then at once
have I, reclining back upon my heels,
stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
with visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Idem

TO A SNOWDROP

LONE Flower, hemmed in with snows, and white as they
But hardier far, once more I see thee bend
Thy forehead as if fearful to offend,
Like an unbidden guest. Though day by day
Storms, sallying from the mountain-tops, waylay
The rising sun, and on the plains descend;
Yet art thou welcome, welcome as a friend
Whose zeal outruns his promise! Blue-eyed May
Shall soon behold this border thickly set
With bright jonquils, their odours lavishing
On the soft west-wind and his frolic peers;
Nor will I then thy modest grace forget,
Chaste Snowdrop, venturous harbinger of Spring.
And pensive monitor of fleeting years!

Idem

NOVEMBER 1

How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright
The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,
Which, strewn with snow smooth as the sky can shed,
Shines like another sun—on mortal sight
Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,
And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,
If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—
Terrestrial, but a surface, by the flight
Of sad mortality's earth-sullying wing.
Unswept, unstained? Nor shall the aerial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.

Idem

TO A FIELD MOUSE

WEE, sleekit, cow'rin' tim'rous beastie,
Oh, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee
Wi' murdering pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin':
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell and keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste
An' weary winter comin' fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till, crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turned out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, though I canna see,
I guess an' fear.

ROBERT BURNS, 1759–1796

DEVIL'S YULE

HENCE, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lute sent forth! Thou wind, that ravest without,
Bare craig, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devil's yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of a host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold! . . .

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, 1772–1834

THE ONE RED LEAF

THE night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—

There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often dance it can,
Hanging so light and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks at the sky.

Idem

LATE LEAVES

THE leaves are falling; so am I;
The few late flowers have moisture in the eye;
So have I too.
Scarcely on any bough is heard
Joyous, or even unjoyous, bird
The whole wood through.

Winter may come: he brings but nigher
His circle (yearly narrowing) to the fire
Where old friends meet.
Let him; now heaven is overcast,
And spring and summer both are past,
And all things sweet.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, 1775–1864

SHELLEY'S WINTER

A SONG

A WIDOW bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, 1792–1822

THE ZUCCA

SUMMER was dead and Autumn was expiring,
And infant Winter laughed upon the land
All cloudlessly and cold; when I desiring
More in the world than any understand,
Wept o'er the beauty, which like sea retiring,
Had left the earth bare as the wave-worn sand
Of my lorn heart, and o'er the grass and flowers
Pale for the falsehood of the flattering hours.
Summer was dead, but I yet lived to weep
The instability of all but weeping;
And on the earth lulled in her winter sleep
I woke, and envied her as she was sleeping,
Too happy Earth! over thy face shall creep
The wakening vernal airs, until thou, leaping
From unremembered dreams, shalt see
No death divide thy immortality.

Idem

WINTER

IT was a winter such as when birds die
In the deep forests; and the fishes lie
Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
A wrinkled clod as hard as brick; and when
Among their children, comfortable men
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold;
Alas then for the homeless beggar old!

A fragment in *The Keepsake*, 1829

Idem

THE OPENING YEAR

ORPHAN hours, the year is dead;
Come and sigh, come and weep;
Merry hours smile instead,
For the year is but asleep:
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

THE POET'S WINTER

As an earthquake rocks a corse
  In its coffin in the clay,
So white Winter, that rough nurse,
  Rocks the dead-cold year to-day.
Solemn hours! wail aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

As the wild air stirs and sways
  The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
  Rocks the year:—be calm and mild,
Trembling hours; she will arise
With new love within her eyes.

January grey is here,
  Like a sexton by her grave;
February bears the bier,
  March with grief doth howl and rave;
And April weeps—but, O ye hours!
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

Idem

A CALM WINTER'S NIGHT

How beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
were discord to the speaking quietude
that wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault
studded with stars unutterably bright,
through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
seems like a canopy which love had spread
to curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
robed in a garment of untrodden snow—
yon darksome rocks whence icicles depend
so stainless that their white and glittering spires
tinge not the moon's pure beam—all form a scene
where musing solitude might love to lift
her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
where silence undisturbed might watch alone,
so cold, so bright, so still.

Idem

KEATS' WINTER

THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead, on each side seem to freeze,
Imprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

The Eve of St. Agnes
JOHN KEATS, 1795–1821

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

O, what can ail thee, knight at arms,
  Alone and palely loitering;
The sedge has withered from the lake
  And no birds sing.

O, what can ail thee, knight at arms,
  So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
  And the harvest's done.

I see a lilly on thy brow
  With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
  Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said—
I love thee true.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gazed and sighed full sore;
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me to sleep,
And there I dreamed, ah woe betide,
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all:
They cry'd—'La belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Idem

A DREAR-NIGHTED DECEMBER

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity:
The north cannot undo them,
With a sleety whistle through them;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting,
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

Ah! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writhed not at passed joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbed sense to steel it,
Was never told in rhyme.

Idem

LONE WINTER EVENING

. . . The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

Idem

NOVEMBER

THE landscape sleeps in mist from morn till noon;
And, if the sun looks through, 'tis with a face
Beamless and pale and round, as if the moon,
When done the journey of her nightly race,
Had found him sleeping, and supplied his place.
For days the shepherds in the fields may be,
Nor mark a patch of sky—blindfold they trace
The plains, that seem without a bush or tree,
Whistling aloud by guess, to flocks they cannot see.

The timid hare seems half its fears to lose,
Crouching and sleeping neath its grassy lair,
And scarcely startles, though the shepherd goes
Close by its home, and dogs are barking there;
The wild colt only turns around to stare
At passer by, then knaps his hide again;
And moody crows beside the road forbear
To fly, though pelted by the passing swain;
Thus day seems turned to night, and tries to wake in vain

The owlet leaves her hiding-place at noon,
And flaps her grey wings in the doubling light;
The hoarse jay screams to see her out so soon,
And small birds chirp and startle with affright;
Much doth it scare the superstitious wight,
Who dreams of sorry luck, and sore dismay;
While cow-boys think the day a dream of night,
And oft grow fearful on their lonely way,
Fancying that ghosts may wake, and leave their graves by day.

Yet but awhile the slumbering weather flings
Its murky prison round—then winds wake loud;
With sudden stir the startled forest sings
Winter's returning song—cloud races cloud,
And the horizon throws away its shroud,
Sweeping a stretching circle from the eye;
Storms upon storms in quick succession crowd,
And o'er the sameness of the purple sky
Heaven paints, with hurried hand, wild hues of every dye.

At length it comes among the forest oaks,
With sobbing ebbs, and uproar gathering high;
The scared, hoarse raven on its cradle croaks,
And stockdove-flocks in hurried terrors fly,
While the blue hawk hangs o'er them in the sky.—
The hedger hastens from the storm begun,
To seek a shelter that may keep him dry;
And foresters low bent, the wind to shun,
Scarce hear amid the strife the poacher's muttering gun.

The ploughman hears its humming rage begin,
And hies for shelter from his naked toil;
Buttoning his doublet closer to his chin,
He bends and scampers o'er the elting soil,
While clouds above him in wild fury boil,
And winds drive heavily the beating rain;
He turns his back to catch his breath awhile,
Then ekes his speed and faces it again,
To seek the shepherd's hut beside the rushy plain.

The boy, that scareth from the spiry wheat
The melancholy crow—in hurry weaves,
Beneath an ivied tree, his sheltering seat,
Of rushy flags and sedges tied in sheaves,
Or from the field a shock of stubble thieves.
There he doth dithering sit, and entertain
His eyes with marking the storm-driven leaves;
Oft spying nests where he spring eggs had ta'en,
And wishing in his heart 'twas summer-time again.

Thus wears the month along, in checkered moods,
Sunshine and shadows, tempests loud, and calms;
One hour dies silent o'er the sleepy woods,
The next wakes loud with unexpected storms;
A dreary nakedness the field deforms—
Yet many a rural sound, and rural sight,
Lives in the village still about the farms,
Where toil's rude uproar hums from morn till night
Noises, in which the ears of industry delight.

At length the stir of rural labour's still,
And industry her care awhile foregoes;

THE POET'S WINTER

When winter comes in earnest to fulfil
His yearly task, at bleak November's close,
And stops the plough, and hides the fields in snows;
When frost locks up the stream in chill delay
And mellows on the hedge the jetty sloes,
For little birds—then toil hath time for play,
And nought but threshers' flails awake the dreary day.

JOHN CLARE, 1793–1864

THE WINTER'S COME

SWEET chestnuts brown like soling leather turn;
The larch trees, like the colour of the Sun;
That paled sky in the Autumn seemed to burn,
What a strange scene before us now does run—
Red, brown, and yellow, russet, black, and dun;
White thorn, wild cherry, and the poplar bare;
The sycamore all withered in the sun.
No leaves are now upon the birch tree there:
All now is stript to the cold wintry air.

See, not one tree but what has lost its leaves—
And yet the landscape wears a pleasing hue.
The winter chill on his cold bed receives
Foliage which once hung o'er the waters blue.
Naked and bare the leafless trees repose.
Blue-headed titmouse now seeks maggots rare,
Sluggish and dull the leaf-strewn river flows;
That is not green, which was so through the year
Dark chill November draweth to a close.

'Tis Winter, and I love to read indoors,
When the Moon hangs her crescent up on high;
While on the window shutters the wind roars,
And storms like furies pass remorseless by.
How pleasant on a feather bed to lie,
Or, sitting by the fire, in fancy soar
With Dante or with Milton to regions high,
Or read fresh volumes we've not seen before,
Or o'er old Burton's Melancholy pore.

Idem

IN MEMORIAM

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day:
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forests crack'd, the waters curl'd,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies which aver
That all thy motions gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags a labouring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

TENNYSON, 1809–1892

BROWNING'S WINTER

LOVE

So, the year's done with!
(*Love me for ever!*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(*Love me for ever!*)

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812–1889

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair

In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

Idem

BY THE FIRESIDE

I

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn-evenings come:
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
'There he is at it, deep in Greek:
Now then, or never, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship!'

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends:
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

V

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees:
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand:
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

IX

Does it feed the little lake below?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow!

X

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours,

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged.

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
  Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
  See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
  On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
  Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
  Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
  Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
  With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
  'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
  For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
  Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
  And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
  It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem!

XXIII

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV

My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

XXIX

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXXI

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,
  Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
  While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
  And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
  And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
  Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder.
  The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,
  See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
  Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait!

XXXVII

Oh moment, one and infinite!
  The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
  How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,
  But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
  The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test!
'Hold the last fast!' runs the rhyme.

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf—fear to touch!

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all!
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,
  Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
  His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
  And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
  They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen
  Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
  Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they stood;
  We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
  Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX

How the world is made for each of us!
  How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
  When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

L

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
  It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
  The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
  There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
  As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

LII

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
  Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
  And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
  And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
  When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

Idem

PROSPICE

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
    The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
    I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
    The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
    Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
    And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
    The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
    The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
    And bade me creep past.

No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

Idem

LA NUIT DE DECEMBRE

Du temps que j'étais écolier,
Je restais un soir à veiller
Dans notre salle solitaire.
Devant ma table vint a'asseoir
Un pauvre enfant vêtu de noir,
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

Son visage était triste et beau:
A la lueur de mon flambeau,
Dans mon livre ouvert il vint lire.
Il pencha son front sur ma main,
Et resta jusqu'au lendemain,
Pensif, avec un doux sourire.

Comme j'allais avoir quinze ans,
Je marchais un jour, à pas lents,
Dans un bois, sur une bruyère.
Au pied d'un arbre vint s'asseoir
Un jeune homme vêtu de noir,
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

Je lui demandai mon chemin;
Il tenait un luth d'une main,
De l'autre un bouquet d'églantine.
Il me fit un salut d'ami,
Et, se détournant à demi,
Me montra du doigt la colline.

A l'âge ou l'on croit à l'amour,
J'étais seul dans ma chambre un jour,
Pleurant ma première misère.
Au coin de mon feu vint s'asseoir
Un étranger vêtu de noir,
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

Il était morne et soucieux;
D'une main il montrait les cieux,
Et de l'autre il tenait un glaive.
De ma peine il semblait souffrir,
Mais il ne poussa qu'un soupir,
Et s'évanouit comme un rêve.

A l'âge ou l'on est libertin,
Pour boire un toast en un festin
Un jour je soulevai mon verre.
En face de moi vint s'asseoir
Un convive vêtu de noir,
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

Il secouait sous son manteau
Un haillon de pourpre en lambeau,
Sur sa tête un myrte stérile;
Son bras maigre cherchait le mien,
Et mon verre, en touchant le sien,
Se brisa dans ma main débile.

Un an après, il était nuit,
J'étais à genoux près du lit
Où venait de mourir mon père.
Au chevet du lit vint s'asseoir
Un orphelin vêtu de noir,
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

Ses yeux étaient noyés de pleurs;
Comme les anges de douleurs,
Il était couronné d'épine;
Son luth à terre était gisant,
Sa pourpre de couleur de sang,
Et son glaive dans sa poitrine.

Je m'en suis si bien souvenu,
Que je l'ai toujours reconnu
A tous les instants de ma vie.
C'est une étrange vision;
Et cependant, ange ou démon,
J'ai vu partout cette ombre amie.

Lorsque plus tard, las de souffrir,
Pour renaître ou pour en finir,
J'ai voulu m'exiler de France;
Lorsqu'impatient de marcher,
J'ai voulu partir, et chercher
Les vestiges d'une espérance;

A Pise, au pied de l'Apennin;
A Cologne, en face du Rhin;
A Nice, au penchant des vallées;
A Florence, au fond des palais;
A Brigues, dans les vieux chalets;
Au sein des Alpes désolées;

A Gênes, sous les citronniers;
A Vevay, sous les verts pommiers;
Au Havre, devant l'Atlantique;
A Venise, à l'affreux Lido,
Où vient sur l'herbe d'un tombeau
Mourir la pâle Adriatique;

Partout où, sous ces vastes cieux,
J'ai lassé mon cœur et mes yeux,
Saignant d'une éternelle plaie;
Partout où le boiteux Ennui,
Traînant ma fatigue après lui,
M'a promené sur une claie;

Partout où, sans cesse altéré
De la soif d'un monde ignoré,
J'ai suivi l'ombre de mes songes;
Partout où, sans avoir vécu,
J'ai revu ce que j'avais vu,
La face humaine et ses mensonges;

Partout où, le long des chemins,
J'ai posé mon front dans mes mains
Et sangloté comme une femme;
Partout où j'ai, comme un mouton
Qui laisse sa laine au buisson,
Senti se dénuer mon âme;

Partout où j'ai voulu dormir,
Partout où j'ai voulu mourir,
Partout où j'ai touché la terre,
Sur ma route est venu s'asseoir
Un malheureux vêtu de noir,
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

ALFRED DE MUSSET, 1810–1857

SYMPHONIE EN BLANC MAJEUR

De leur col blanc courbant les lignes,
On voit dans les contes du Nord,
Sur le vieux Rhin, des femmes-cygnes
Nager en chantant près du bord.

Ou, suspendant à quelque branche
Le plumage qui les revêt,
Faire luire leur peau plus blanche
Que la neige de leur duvet.

De ces femmes il en est une,
Qui chez nous descend quelquefois,
Blanche comme le clair de lune
Sur les glaciers dans les cieux froids;

Conviant la vue enivrée
De sa boréale fraîcheur
A des régals de chair nacrée,
A des débauches de blancheur!

Son sein, neige moulée en globe,
Contre les camélias blancs
Et le blanc satin de la robe
Soutient des combats insolents.

Dans ces grandes batailles blanches,
Satins et fleurs ont le dessous,
Et, sans demander leurs revanches,
Jaunissent comme des jaloux.

Sur la blancheur de son épaule,
Paros au grain éblouissant,
Comme dans une nuit du pôle,
Un givre invisible descend.

De quel mica de neige vierge,
De quelle moelle de roseau,
De quelle hostie et de quel cierge
A-t-on fait le blanc de sa peau?

A-t-on pris la goutte lactée
Tachant l'azur du ciel d'hiver,
Le lis à la pulpe argentée,
La blanche écume de la mer,

Le marbre blanc, chair froide et pâle
Où vivent les divinités;
L'argent mat, la laiteuse opale
Qu'irisent de vagues clartés;

L'ivoire, où ses mains ont des ailes,
Et, comme des papillons blancs,
Sur la pointe des notes frêles
Suspendent leurs baisers tremblants;

L'hermine vierge de souillure,
Qui, pour abriter leurs frissons,
Ouate de sa blanche fourrure
Les épaules et les blasons;

Le vif-argent aux fleurs fantasques
Dont les vitraux sont ramagés;
Les blanches dentelles des vasques,
Pleurs de l'ondine en l'air figés;

L'aubépine de mai qui plie
Sous les blancs frimas de ses fleurs;
L'albâtre où la mélancolie
Aime à retrouver ses pâleurs;

Le duvet blanc de la colombe,
Neigeant sur les toits du manoir,
Et la stalactite qui tombe,
Larme blanche de l'antre noir?

Des Groenlands et des Norvèges
Vient-elle avec Séraphita?
Est-ce la Madone des neiges,
Un sphinx blanc que l'hiver sculpta,

Sphinx enterré par l'avalanche,
Gardien des glaciers étoilés,
Et qui, sous sa poitrine blanche,
Cache de blancs secrets gelés?

Sous la glace où calme il repose,
Oh! qui pourra fondre ce cœur!
Oh! qui pourra mettre un ton rose
Dans cette implacable blancheur!

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER, 1811–1872

WINTER

I, SINGULARLY moved
To love the lovely that are not beloved,
Of all the Seasons, most
Love Winter, and to trace
The sense of the Trophonian pallor on her face.
It is not death, but plenitude of peace;
And the dim cloud that does the world enfold
Hath less the characters of dark and cold
Than warmth and light asleep,
And correspondent breathing seems to keep
With the infant harvest, breathing soft below
Its eider coverlet of snow.
Nor is in field or garden anything
But, duly look'd into, contains serene
The substance of things hoped for, in the Spring,
And evidence of Summer not yet seen.
On every chance-mild day
That visits the moist shaw,

The honeysuckle, 'sdaining to be crost
In urgence of sweet life by sleet or frost,
'Voids the time's law
With still increase
Of leaflet new, and little, wandering spray;
Often, in sheltering brakes,
As one from rest disturb'd in the first hour,
Primrose or violet bewilder'd wakes,
And deems 'tis time to flower;
Though not a whisper of her voice he hear.
The buried bulb does know
The signals of the year,
And hails far Summer with his lifted spear.
The gorse-field dark, by sudden, gold caprice,
Turns, here and there, into a Jason's fleece;
Lilies, that soon in Autumn slipp'd their gowns of green,
And vanish'd into earth,
And came again, ere Autumn died, to birth,
Stand full-array'd, amidst the wavering shower,
And perfect for the Summer, less the flower;
In nook of pale or crevice of crude bark,
Thou canst not miss,
If close thou spy, to mark
The ghostly chrysalis,
That, if thou touch it, stirs in its dream dark;
And the flush'd Robin, in the evenings hoar,
Does of Love's Day, as if he saw it, sing;
But sweeter yet than dream or song of Summer or Spring
Are Winter's sometime smiles, that seem to well
From infancy ineffable;
Her wandering, languorous gaze,
So unfamiliar, so without amaze,
On the elemental, chill adversity,
The uncomprehended rudeness; and her sigh
And solemn, gathering tear,
And look of exile from some great repose, the sphere
Of ether, moved by ether only, or
By something still more tranquil.

COVENTRY PATMORE, 1823–1896

ODE TO THE NORTH-EAST WIND

WELCOME, wild North-easter!
Shame it is to see
Odes to every zephyr;
Ne'er a verse to thee.
Welcome, black North-easter!
O'er the German foam;
O'er the Danish moorlands,
From thy frozen home.
Tired we are of summer,
Tired of gaudy glare,
Showers hot and streaming,
Hot and breathless air.
Tired of listless dreaming,
Through the lazy day;
Jovial wind of winter,
Turns us out to play.
Sweep the golden reed-beds;
Crisp the lazy dyke;
Hunger into madness
Every plunging pike.
Fill the lake with wild-fowl;
Fill the marsh with snipe;
While on dreary moorlands
Lonely curlew pipe.
Through the black fir-forest
Thunder harsh and dry,
Shattering down the snow-flakes
Off the curdled sky.
Hark! the brave North-easter!
Breast-high lies the scent,
On by holt and headland,
Over heath and bent.
Chime, ye dappled darlings,
Through the sleet and snow,
Who can over-ride you?
Let the horses go!
Chime, ye dappled darlings,
Down the roaring blast;

You shall see a fox die,
  Ere an hour be past,
Go! and rest to-morrow,
  Hunting in your dreams,
While our skates are ringing
  O'er the frozen streams.
Let the luscious South-wind
  Breathe in lovers' sighs,
While the lazy gallants
  Bask in ladies' eyes.
What does he but soften
  Heart alike and pen?
'Tis the hard grey weather
  Breeds hard English men.
What's the soft South-wester?
  'Tis the lady's breeze
Bringing home their true-loves
  Out of all the seas.
But the black North-easter
  Through the snowstorm hurled,
Drives our English hearts of oak
  Seaward round the world.
Come, as came our fathers,
  Heralded by thee,
Conquering from the eastward,
  Lords by land and sea.
Come; and strong within us
  Stir the Vikings' blood;
Bracing brain and sinew;
  Blow, thou wind of God.

CHARLES KINGSLEY, 1819–1875

THAT WIND

THAT wind, I used to hear it swelling;
  With joy divinely deep;
You might have seen my hot tears welling,
  But rapture made me weep.

THE POET'S WINTER

I used to love on winter nights
To lie and dream alone
Of all the rare and real delights
My lonely years had known;

And oh!—above the best—of those
That coming time should bear,
Like heaven's own glorious stars they rose,
Still beaming bright and fair.

EMILY BRONTË, 1818–1848

MEREDITH'S WINTER

XVI

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour,
When in the firelight steadily aglow,
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us: and hushed we sat
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing:
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk, 'Ah, yes!
Love dies!' I said: I never thought it less.
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift:—
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound!

Modern Love

GEORGE MEREDITH, 1828–1909

XXIII

'Tis Christmas weather, and a country house
Receives us: rooms are full: we can but get
An attic-crib. Such lovers will not fret
At that, it is half-said. The great carouse

Knocks hard upon the midnight's hollow door,
But when I knock at hers, I see the pit.
Why did I come here in that dullard fit?
I enter, and lie couched upon the floor.
Passing, I caught the coverlet's quick beat:—
Come, Shame, burn to my soul! and Pride, and Pain—
Foul demons that have tortured me, enchain!
Out in the freezing darkness the lambs bleat.
The small bird stiffens in the low starlight.
I know not how, but shuddering as I slept,
I dreamed a banished angel to me crept:
My feet were nourished on her breasts all night.

Idem

XLVII

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye:
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
The hour became her husband and my bride.
Love that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love that had robbed us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave,
Where I have seen across the twilight wave
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

Idem

THE THRUSH IN FEBRUARY

I KNOW him, February's thrush,
  And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
  Where soon will sprout the thorns and bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills
  Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,
A herald of the million bills;
  And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir
  And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
  He neighbours, piping to his world:—

The wooded pathways dank on brown,
  The branches on grey cloud a web,
The long green roller of the down,
  An image of the deluge-ebb:—

And farther, they may hear along
  The stream beneath the poplar row,
By fits, like welling rocks, the song
  Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale
  When waves of warm South-western rains
Have left our heavens clear in pale,
  With faintest beck of moist red veins:

Vermillion wings, by distance held
  To pause aflight while fleeting swift:
And high aloft the pearl inshelled
  Her lucid glow in glow will lift;

A little south of coloured sky;
  Directing, gravely amorous,
The human of a tender eye
  Through pure celestial on us:

Remote, not alien; still, not cold;
  Unraying yet, more pearl than star;
She seems a while the vale to hold
  In trance, and homelier makes the far.

Then Earth her sweet unscented breathes;
  An orb of lustre quits the height;
And like broad iris-flags, in wreaths
  The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,
  Nor ever after separate
From such a twilight of the year
  Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of Winter's throat,
  The young time with the life ahead;
And my young time his leaping note
  Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

Imbedded in a land of greed,
  Of mammon-quakings dire as Earth's,
My care was but to soothe my need;
  At peace among the little worths.

To light and song my yearning aimed;
  To that deep breast of song and light
Which men have barrenest proclaimed;
  As 'tis to senses pricked with fright.

So mine are these new fruitings rich
  The simple to the common brings;
I keep the youth of souls who pitch
  Their joy in this old heart of things:

Who feel the Coming young as aye,
  Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;
Alive for life, awake to die;
  One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,
  The singer, passes: lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
  The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught
  Till what I am fast shoreward drives.
They are the vessel of the Thought.
  The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave,
  Save husks to raise and bid it burn.
Glimpse of its livingness will wave
  A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death,
  Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird
Of promise! bird of happy breath!
  I hear, I would the City heard.

The City of the smoky fray;
  A prodded ox, it drags and moans:
Its Morrow no man's child; its Day
  A vulture's morsel beaked to bones.

It thrives without a mark for strife;
  It feasts beside a famished host:
The loose restraint of wanton life,
  That threatened penance in the ghost!

Yet there our battle urges; there
  Spring heroes many: issuing thence,
Names that should leave no vacant air
  For fresh delight in confidence.

Life was to them the bag of grain,
  And Death the weedy harrow's tooth.
Those warriors of the sighting brain
  Give worn Humanity new youth.

Our song and star are they to lead
  The tidal multitude and blind
From bestial to the higher breed
  By fighting souls of love divined.

They scorned the ventral dream of peace,
  Unknown in nature. This they knew:
That life begets with fair increase
  Beyond the flesh, if life be true.

Just reason based on valiant blood,
  The instinct bred afield would match
To pipe thereof a swelling flood,
  Were men of Earth made wise in watch

Though now the numbers count as drops
  An urn might bear, they father Time.
She shapes anew her dusty crops;
  Her quick in their own likeness climb.

Of their own force do they create;
  They climb to light, in her their root.
Your brutish cry at muffled fate
  She smites with pangs of worse than brute.

She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears
  A Mother whom no cry can melt;
But read her past desires and fears,
  The letters on her breast are spelt.

A slayer, yea, as when she pressed
  Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,
To sacrifice she prompts her best:
  She reaps them as the sower reaps.

But read her thought to speed the race,
  And stars rush forth of blackest night:
You chill not at a cold embrace
  To come, nor dread a dubious might.

Her double visage, double voice,
  In oneness rise to quench the doubt.
This breath, her gift, has only choice
  Of service, breathe we in or out.

Since Pain and Pleasure on each hand
  Led our wild steps from slimy rock
To yonder sweeps of gardenland,
  We breathe but to be sword or block.

The sighting brain her good decree
  Accepts; obeys those guides, in faith,
By reason hourly fed, that she,
  To some the clod, to some the wraith.

Is more, no mask; a flame, a stream.
  Flame, stream, are we, in mid career
From torrent source, delirious dream,
  To heaven-reflecting currents clear.

And why the sons of Strength have been
  Her cherished offspring ever; how
The Spirit served by her is seen
  Through Law; perusing love will show.

Love born of knowledge, love that gains
  Vitality as Earth it mates,
The meaning of the Pleasures, Pains,
  The Life, the Death, illuminates.

For love we Earth, then serve we all;
  Her mystic secret then is ours:
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
  Unclouded, as beholds her flowers

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
  Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
When lowly, with a broken neck,
  To crocus lays her cheek to mire.

Idem

CHANSON D'AUTOMNE

Les sanglots longs
Des violons
  De l'automne
Blessent mon cœur
D'une langueur
  Monotone.

Tout suffocant
Et blême, quand
  Sonne l'heure,
Je me souviens
Des jours anciens
  Et je pleure;

Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
  Qui m'emporte
Deçà, delà,
Pareil à la
  Feuille morte.

PAUL VERLAINE, 1844–1896

COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL

DANS le vieux parc solitaire et glacé,
Deux formes ont tout à l'heure passé.

Leurs yeux sont morts et leurs lèvres sont molles,
Et l'on entend à peine leurs paroles.

Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé,
Deux spectres ont évoqué le passé.

— Te souvient-il de notre extase ancienne?
— Pourquoi voulez-vous donc qu'il m'en souveinne?

— Ton cœur bat-il toujours à mon seul nom?
Toujours vois-tu mon âme en rêve?—Non.

— Ah! les beaux jours de bonheur indicible
Où nous joignions nos bouches! — C'est possible.

— Qu'il était bleu, le ciel, et grand l'espoir!
— L'espoir a fui, vaincu, vers le ciel noir.

Tels ils marchaient dans les avoines folles,
Et la nuit seule entendit leurs paroles.

Idem

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S WINTER

PICTURE BOOKS IN WINTER

SUMMER fading, winter comes—
Frosty mornings, tingling thumbs,
Window robins, winter rooks,
And the picture story-books.

THE POET'S WINTER

Water now is turned to stone
Nurse and I can walk upon;
Still we find the flowing brooks
In the picture story-books.

All the pretty things put by,
Wait upon the children's eye,
Sheep and shepherds, trees and crooks
In the picture story-books.

We may see how all things are,
Seas and cities, near and far,
And the flying fairies' looks,
In the picture story-books.

How am I to sing your praise,
Happy chimney corner days,
Sitting safe in nursery nooks,
Reading picture story-books?

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, 1850–1894

WINTER

In rigorous hours, when down the iron lane
The redbreast looks in vain
For hips and haws,
Lo, shining flowers upon my window-pane
The silver pencil of the winter draws.

When all the snowy hill
And the bare woods are still;
When snipes are silent in the frozen bogs,
And all the garden garth is whelmed in mire,
Lo, by the hearth, the laughter of the logs!
More fair than roses, lo, the flowers of fire!

Songs of Travel
Idem

TO S. R. CROCKETT

ON RECEIVING A DEDICATION

BLOWS the wind to-day, and the sun and the rain are flying,
Blows the wind on the moors to-day and now,
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying,
My heart remembers how!

Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,
Standing stones on the vacant wine-red moor,
Hills of sheep, and the howes of the silent vanished races,
And winds, austere and pure!

Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,
Hills of home! and to hear again the call;
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees crying.
And hear no more at all.

Idem

LOVE IN WINTER

BETWEEN the berried holly-bush
The Blackbird whistled to the Thrush:
'Which way did bright-eyed Bella go?
Look, Speckle-breast, across the snow,—
Are those her dainty tracks I see,
That wind beside the shrubbery?'

The Throstle pecked the berries still.
'No need for looking, Yellow-bill;
Young Frank was there an hour ago,
Half frozen, waiting in the snow;
His callow beard was white with rime,—
'Tchuck,—'tis a merry pairing-time!'

'What would you?' twittered in the Wren;
'These are the reckless ways of men.
I watched them bill and coo as though
They thought the sign of Spring was snow;
If men but timed their loves as we,
'Twould save this inconsistency.'

'Nay, Gossip,' chirped the Robin, 'nay;
I like their unreflective way.
Besides, I heard enough to show
Their love is proof against the snow:—
"Why wait," he said, "why wait for May,
When love can warm a winter's day?" '

AUSTIN DOBSON, 1840–1921

THE WANDERER

LOVE comes back to his vacant dwelling,—
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!
We see him stand by the open door,
With his great eyes sad, and his bosom swelling.

He makes as though in our arms repelling,
He fain would lie as he lay before;—
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling,—
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!

Ah, who shall help us from over-spelling
That sweet forgotten, forbidden lore!
E'en as we doubt in our heart once more,
With a rush of tears to our eyelids welling,
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling.

Idem

THE END OF THE WORLD

HE HATH OUTSOARED THE SHADOW OF OUR NIGHT

AND so Death took him. Yet be comforted:
Above this sea of sorrow lift thy head.
Death—or his shadow—look, is over all;
What but an alternating funeral
The long procession of the nights and days?
The starry heavens fail, the solid earth
Fails and its fashion. Why, beholding this,
Why with our wail o'er sad mortality
Mourn we for men, mere men, that fade and fall?
Battle or shipwreck, love or lunacy,

Some warp o' the will, some taint o' the blood, some touch
Of winter's icy breath, the Dog-star's rage
Relentless, on the dank and ghostly mists
Of Autumn—any or all of these suffice
To die by. In the fee and fear of Fate
Lives all that is. We one by one depart
Into the silence—one by one. The Judge
Shakes the vast urn: the lot leaps forth: we die.
But *he* is happy, and you mourn in vain.
He has outsoared the envy of gods and men,
False fortune and the dark and treacherous way,
—Scatheless: he never lived to pray for death,
Nor sinned—to fear her, nor deserved to die.
We that survive him, weak and full of woes,
Live ever with a fearful eye on Death—
The how and when of dying: 'Death' the thunder,
'Death' the wild lightning speaks to us.
In vain,—
Atedius hearkens not to words of mine.
Yet shall he hearken to the dead: be done,
Sweet lad he loved, be done with Death, and come,
Leaving the dark Tartarean halls, come hither;
Come, for thou canst: 'tis not to Charon given,
Nor yet to Cerberus, to keep in thrall
The innocent soul: come to thy father, soothe
His sorrow, dry his eyes, and day and night
A living voice be with him—look upon him,
Tell him thou art not dead (thy sister mourns,
Comfort her, comfort as a brother can)
And win thy parents back to thee again.

Silvarum II. i. 207-234
STATIUS
Translated by H. W. GARROD

THE LAST DAY

THUS, when the last concluding hour is come,
That finish'd Nature shall receive her doom;
The loosen'd fabric shall in pieces fall
And ancient Chaos triumph over all.

Stars, shocking stars, shall lose their wonted way,
Cast from their spheres, and drop into the sea;
The shores no longer shall the waves restrain,
But on the land admit the rushing main;
The moon shall cease her nightly stage to run,
Usurp her brother's course, and thwart the sun;
And the whole frame, in wild confusion hurl'd,
Shall mar the union of the shatter'd world.

LUCAN
Translated by JABEZ HUGHES

THE END OF THE WORLD

THE snow had fallen many nights and days;
The sky was come upon the earth at last,
Sifting thinly down as endlessly.
As though within the system of blind planets
Something had been forgotten or overdriven.
The dawn now seemed neglected in the grey
Where mountains were unbuilt and shadowless trees
Rootlessly paused or hung upon the air.
There was no wind, but now and then a sigh
Crossed that dry falling dust and rifted it
Through crevices of slate and door and casement.
Perhaps the new moon's time was even past.
Outside, the first white twilights were too void
Until a sheep called once, as to a lamb,
And tenderness crept everywhere from it;
But now the flock must have strayed far away.
The lights across the valley must be veiled,
The smoke lost in the greyness or the dusk.
For more than three days now the snow had thatched
That cow house roof where it had ever melted
With yellow stains from the beasts' breath inside;
But yet a dog howled there, though not quite lately.
Someone passed down the valley swift and singing,
Yes, with locks spreaded like a son of morning;
But if he seemed too tall to be a man
It was that men had been so long unseen,
Or shapes loom larger through a moving snow.

And he was gone and food had not been given him.
When snow slid from an overweighted leaf,
Shaking the tree, it might have been a bird
Slipping in sleep or shelter, whirring wings;
Yet never bird fell out, save once a dead one—
And in two days the snow had covered it.
The dog had howled again—or thus it seemed
Until a lean fox passed and cried no more.
All was so safe indoors where life went on
Glad of the close enfolding snow—O glad
To be so safe and secret at its heart,
Watching the strangeness of familiar things.
They knew not what dim hours went on, went by,
For while they slept the clock stopt newly wound
As the cold hardened. Once they watched the road,
Thinking to be remembered. Once they doubted
If they had kept the sequence of the days,
Because they heard not any sound of bells.
A butterfly that hid until the Spring
Under a ceiling's shadow, dropt, was dead.
The coldness seemed more nigh, the coldness deepened
As a sound deepens into silences;
It was of earth and came not by the air;
The earth was cooling and drew down the sky.
The air was crumbling. There was no more sky.
Rails of a broken bed charred in the grate,
And when he touched the bars he thought the sting
Came from their heat—he could not feel such cold. . . .
She said, 'O, do not sleep,
Heart, heart of me, keep near me. No, no; sleep.
I will not lift his fallen, quiet eyelids,
Although I know he would awaken then—
He closed them thus but now of his own will.
He can stay with me while I do not lift them.'

GORDON BOTTOMLEY, *b.* 1874

GOD AND MARY'S WINTER

GOD AND MARY'S WINTER

This leafless beech envies the fir
that needs not spring to burnish her,
but when the winter world is black
defies with green the almanac.

An eager wind upon the boughs,
empty as a deserted house,
knocks loudly, and then listens shocked
at the grim silence on which he knocked.

His startled footsteps ring so loud,
he does not hear the little crowd
of rustling guests behind the fence
between this world and that one dance.

He does not see, like coloured paper,
moths veering round a phantom taper,
the leaves return to haunt the tree's
dark rooms, and quiet passages.

He knocks again, remembering
the company she kept in spring.
Silence! He stamps, and, leaving her,
calls on the hospitable fir.

Now the wind goes. The cold air huddles
so close it seems to crush the needles,
while, violin to violins
whispering far, the snow begins.

And now those branches almost ache
under the fingers, flake by flake,
that chase their haggard outlines with
the pencils of a silversmith.

Each bough so whitens with the brittle
surface of newly-hammered metal,
you'd think Cellini carved the tree
twig by twig in filigree.

The beech-tree, as the snowflakes cease,
falls with the fir upon the peace
that may have folded branch and stem
the olive-trees at Bethlehem.

GOD AND MARY'S WINTER

		PAGE
WRITTEN ON AN ISLAND OFF THE BRETON COAST	*Venantius Fortunatus* *c.* 530–*c.* 603	323
A CAROL	*Sloane MS.*	323
OUR SOVEREIGN LADY	*Bassus*	324
SONG TO OUR LADY	*Egerton MS.* 613	325
PRAY FOR US TO THE PRINCE OF PEACE	*Balliol MS.* Translated by *Helen Waddell*	326
I SAW THREE SHIPS	*Anon.*	327
HAYLL, COMLY AND CLENE!	*The Towneley Plays*	328
THE HOLLY AND THE IVY	*Fifteenth Century*	329
ODE ON THE NATIVITY	*John Milton* 1608–1674	330
PRAYER		332
THE SHEEPHEARDS' SONG	*Edmund Bolton* *Sixteenth Century*	332
THE BURNING BABE	*Robert Southwell* 1560–1595	333
OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY	*Richard Rowlands* 1565–1620	334
WINTER CHID ALOUD	*Richard Crashaw* 1612–1649	335
SUN IN WINTER	*Jeremy Taylor* 1613–1667	336
THE KING'S PROGRESS	*Christ Church MS.* *K.* 3, 43-5	337
A LYKE-WAKE DIRGE	*Anon*	338
ST. AGNES EVE	*Tennyson* 1809–1892	339
NOËL	*Théophile Gautier* 1811–1872	340
CHRISTMAS EVE AND EASTER DAY	*Robert Browning* 1812–1889	340
ST. BRANDON	*Matthew Arnold* 1822–1888	345
THE WISE MEN	*G. K. Chesterton* 1874–	347
CHRISTMAS MINIATURE	*Herbert Palmer*	349

GOD AND MARY'S WINTER

WRITTEN ON AN ISLAND OFF THE BRETON COAST

You at God's altar stand, His minister,
And Paris lies about you and the Seine:
Around this Breton isle the Ocean swells,
Deep water and one love between us twain.

Wild is the wind, but still thy name is spoken;
Rough is the sea: it sweeps not o'er thy face.
Still runs my love for shelter to its dwelling,
Hither, O heart, to thine abiding place.

Swift as the waves beneath an east wind breaking,
Dark as beneath a winter sky the sea,
So to my heart crowd memories awaking.
So dark, O love, my spirit without thee.

VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS, c. 530–c. 603

A CAROL

Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.
I saw a fair maiden
Sitten and sing:
She lullèd a little Child
A sweeté Lording.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting.
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

That Eternal Lord is He
That made allé thing;
Of allé Lordés He is Lord
Of every King He's King.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay, my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

There was mickel melody
At that Childés birth:
Though the songsters were heavenly,[1]
They madé mickel mirth.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

Angels bright they sang that night
And saiden to that Child:
'Blessèd be Thou, and so be she
That is both meek and mild.'
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

Pray we now to that Child
As to his Mother dear;
To grant them all His blessing
That now maken cheer.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

Sloane MS.

OUR SOVEREIGN LADY

A Maid peerless
Hath borne God's Son:
Nature gave place
When Ghostly grace
Subdued reason.

As for beauty
Or high gentry
She is the flower:

[1]*MS.* Allé tho wern in hevené bliss.

By God elect
For this effect
Man to succour.

Of virgins Queen,
Lodestar of light,
Whom to honour
We ought to endeavour
Us day and night.

A Mediæval Anthology
Bassus, sig. C. 2

SONG TO OUR LADY

Of one that is so fair and bright
Velut maris stella,
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella.
I cry to thee to turn to me;[1]
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
Tam pia.
That I may come to thee,
Maria.

In sorrow, counsel thou are best,
Felix fecundata:
For all the weary thou art rest,
Mater honorata:
Beseech Him in thy mildest mood,
Who for us did shed His Blood
In Cruce.
That we may come to Him
In luce.

All this world was forlorn,
Eva peccatrice.
Till Our Saviour Lord was born
De te genetrice;

[1]*MS.* 'I crie to the, thou se to me.'

With thy Ave sin went away,
Dark night went and in came day
Salutis.
The will of healing sprang from thee,
Virtutis.

Lady, flower of everything,
Rosa sine spina,
Thou bore Jesus, Heaven's King,
Gratia Divina.
Of all I say thou bore the prize,
Lady, Queen of Paradise
Electa:
Maiden mild, Mother
Es effecta.

Well He knows He is thy Son,
Ventre quem portasti:
He will not refuse thy bone,[1]
Parvum quem lactasti:
So courteous and so good He is,
He hath brought us to our bliss
Superni,
Who hast shut up the dark foul pit
Inferni.

Explicit Cantus Iste
Egerton MS. 613

PRAY FOR US TO THE PRINCE OF PEACE

AMICE CHRISTI JOHANNES

To Christ's own darling,
The which was maid both old and young,
My heart is set a song to sing:
Amice Christi Johannes.

For he was so clean a maid
On Christ's breast asleep he laid,
Prophets of Heaven to him said:
Amice Christi Johannes.

[1]bone, *request.*

GOD AND MARY'S WINTER

When Christ before Pilate was brought
This clean maid forsook Him nought!
To die with Him was all his thought:
Amice Christi Johannes.

Christ's mother was him[1] betake[2],
A maid to be another's make[3]
Pray we to him that he us not forsake,
Amice Christi Johannes.

Balliol MS.

I SAW THREE SHIPS

As I sat under a sycamore tree,
—A sycamore tree, a sycamore tree,
I looked me out upon the sea
On Christ's Sunday at morn.

I saw three ships a-sailing there,
—A-sailing there, a-sailing there,
Jesu, Mary and Joseph they bare
On Christ's Sunday at morn.

Joseph did whistle and Mary did sing,
—Mary did sing, Mary did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring
For joy our Lord was born.

O they sail'd in to Bethlehem!
—To Bethlehem, to Bethlehem;
Saint Michael was the sterèsman.
Saint John sat in the horn.

And all the bells on earth did ring
—On earth did ring, on earth did ring;
'Welcome be thou Heaven's King,
On Christ's Sunday at morn.'

ANON.

[1]Him is here dative—to him.
[2]betake, betaken, *i.e. entrusted.* [3]Make, *companion.*

HAYLL, COMLY AND CLENE!

Primus Pastor.

HAYLL, comly and clene!
Hayll, young child!
Hayll, maker, as I meyne,
Of a madyn so mylde!
Thou has waryd, I weyne,
The warlo so wylde;
The fals gyler of teyn
Now goys he begylde.
Lo, he merys;
Lo, he laghys, my swetyng.
A welfare metyng,
I have holden my hetyng;
Have a bob of cherys.

Secundus Pastor.

Hayll, sufferan savyoure!
Ffor thou has us soght:
Hayll, frely foyde and floure
That all thyng has wroght!
Hayll, full of favoure
That made all of noght!
Hayll! I kneyll and I cowre.
A byrd have I broght.
To my barn.
Hayll, lytyll tyné mop!
Of our crede thou art crop:
I wold drynk on thy cop,
Lytyll day starne.

Maker (?), *Creator.* meyne, *mean.* madyn, *maiden.* waryd, *cursed.* weyne, *ween.* warlo, *devil.* fals, *false.* gyler, *beguiler.* teyn, *affliction, mischief.* merys, *he is merry.* laghys, *laughs.* hetyng (?), *gift.* bob, *bunch or cluster.*

sufferan, *sovereign.* savyoure, *Saviour.* frely, *freely.* foyde, *child.* floure, *flower.* cowre, *cower.* barn, *child,* cf. *Scots 'bairn,' but barn still survives in Northern dialect English.* tyné, *tiny.* mop, *term of endearment for a child.* cop, *cup.* lytyll, *little.* day starne, *day star.*

Tertius Pastor.

Hayll, derlyng dere
Full of godhede!
I pray the be nere
When that I have nede.
Hayll! swete is thy chere!
My hart wold blede
To se the sytt here
In so poore wede.
With no pennys.
Hayll! put forth thy dall!
I bryng the bot a ball:
Have and play the with all
And go to the tenys.

ANON

The Second Shepherd's Play (*The Towneley Plays*)
Temp. (?) 1421–1483

derlyng, *darling*. the, *thee*. nere, *near*. when that, *when*. chere, *cheer, face*. blede, *bleed*. wede, *clothing*. dall, *hand*. bot, *but*. with all, *withal*. tenys, *tennis*.

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

THE holly and the ivy
Now are both well grown;
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.

The rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.

The holly bears a blossom
As white as lily flower;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our sweet Saviour.
The rising of the sun, etc.

The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good.
The rising of the sun, etc.

The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas day in the morn.
The rising of the sun, etc.

The holly bears a bark
As bitter as any gall;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.
The rising of the sun, etc.

The holly and the ivy
Now both are well grown;
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.

The rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.

Fifteenth Century

ODE ON THE NATIVITY

. . . THE Shepherds on the Lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sate simply chatting in a rustick row;
Full little thought they than,
That the mighty *Pan*
Was kindly com to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or els their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

When such musick sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortall finger strook,
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blisfull rapture took:
The Air such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echos still prolongs each heav'nly close.

Nature that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
  Of Cynthia's seat, the Airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was don,
  And that her raign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heav'n and Earth in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight
A Globe of circular light,
  That with long beams the shame-fac't night array'd,
The helmed Cherubim
And sworded Seraphim,
  Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displaid,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes to Heav'n's new born Heir.

Such Musick (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
  But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator Great
His constellations set,
  And the well-ballanc't world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltring waves their oozy channel keep.

Ring out ye Crystall sphears,
Once bless our human ears,
  (If ye have power to touch our senses so)
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
  And let the Base of Heav'n's deep Organ blow,
And with your nine fold harmony
Make up full consort to th' Angelike symphony.

For if such holy Song
Enwrap our fancy long,
  Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,
And speckl'd vanity
Will sicken soon and die,

And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould,
And Hell it self will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

JOHN MILTON, 1608–1674

PRAYER

THE SHEEPHEARDS' SONG

A CAROLL OR HIMME FOR CHRISTMAS

SWEETE Musique, sweeter farre
Then any Song is sweete:
Sweete Musique heavenly rare,
Mine eares (o peeres) dooth greete.
You gentle flocks, whose fleeces pearl'd with dewe,
Resemble heaven, whom golden drops make bright:
Listen, o listen, now, o not to you
Our pipes make sport to shorten wearie night,
But voyces most divine,
Make blissful Harmonie:
Voyces that seeme to shine,
For what else cleares the skie?
Tunes can we heare, but not the singers see
The tunes divine, and so the Singers be.

Loe how the firmament,
Within an azure fold:
The flock of starres hath pent,
That we might them behold.
Yet from their beames proceedeth not this light,
Nor can their Christalls such reflection give:
What then dooth make the Element so bright?
The heavens are come downe upon earth to live
But harken to the Song,
Glorie to glories King:
And peace all men among,
These Queristers doo sing.
Angels they are, as also (Sheepheards) hee,
Whom in our feare we doo admire to see.

Let not amazement blinde,
Your soules (said he) annoy:
To you and all mankinde,
My message bringeth joy.
For loe the worlds great Sheepheard now is borne
A blessed Babe, an Infant full of power:
After long night, up-risen is the morne,
Renowning Bethlem in the Saviour.
Sprung is the perfect day,
By Prophets seen a farre:
Sprung is the mirthfull May,
Which Winter cannot marre.
In Davids Cittie dooth this Sunne appeare:
Clouded in flesh, yet Sheepheards sit we heere.

EDMUND BOLTON
Sixteenth Century

THE BURNING BABE

As I in hoary winter's night
Stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat,
Which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye
To view what fire was near,
A pretty babe all burning bright,
Did in the air appear:
Who, scorchèd with excessive heat,
Such floods of tears did shed.
As though his floods should quench his flames,
Which with his tears were fed:
'Alas!' quoth he, 'but newly born,
In fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts
Or feel my fire, but I!

My faultless breast the furnace is,
The fuel wounding thorns;
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke,
The ashes shames and scorns;

The fuel Justice layeth on,
And mercy blows the coals;
The metal in this furnace wrought
Are(?) men's defilèd souls:
For which, as now on fire I am,
To work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath,
To wash them in my blood.'
With this he vanished out of sight,
And swiftly shrunk away,
And straight I called unto my mind
That it was Christmas Day.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL, 1560–1595

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

UPON my lap my Sovereign sits,
And sucks upon my breast;
Meanwhile his love sustains my life,
And gives my body rest.
Sing, lullaby, my little boy.
Sing, lullaby, my livës joy.

When thou hast taken thy repast,
Repose, my babe, on me.
So may thy mother and thy nurse,
Thy cradle also be. . . .

My babe, my bliss, my child, my choice,
My fruit, my flower, and bud,
My Jesus, and my only joy,
The sum of all my good.
Sing, lullaby, my little boy.
Sing, lullaby, my livës joy.

My sweetness, and the sweetest most
That heaven could earth deliver,
Soul of my love, spirit of my life,
Abide with me for ever.
Sing, lullaby, my little boy.
Sing, lullaby, my livës joy. . . .

Grow up, good fruit, be nourished by
  These fountains two of me,
That only flow with maiden's milk,
  The only meat for thee.
    Sing, lullaby, my little boy.
    Sing, lullaby, my livës joy. . . .

The shepherds left their keeping sheep,
  For joy to see my lamb;
How may I more rejoice to see
  Myself to be the dam.
    Sing, lullaby, my little boy.
    Sing, lullaby, my livës joy. . . .

Let heaven and earth, and saints and men,
  Assistance give to me,
That all their most occurring aid
  Augment my thanks to thee.
    Sing, lullaby, my little boy.
    Sing, lullaby, my livës joy.

RICHARD ROWLANDS, 1565–1620

WINTER CHID ALOUD

WINTER chid aloud, and sent
  The angry North to wage his wars.
The North forgot his fierce intent,
  And left perfumes instead of scars.
By those sweet eyes' persuasive powers
Where he meant frost he scatter'd flowers.

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,
  Young dawn of our eternal day;
We saw Thine eyes break from the East,
  And chase the trembling shades away:
We saw Thee, and we blest the sight,
We saw Thee by Thine own sweet light.

Poor world, said I, what wilt thou do
  To entertain this starry stranger?
Is this the best thou canst bestow—
  A cold and not too cleanly manger?
Content, the powers of heaven and earth,
To fit a bed for this huge birth.

Proud world, said I, cease your contest,
  And let the mighty babe alone;
The phœnix builds the phœnix' nest,
  Love's architecture is his own.
The babe whose birth embraves this morn,
Made His own bed ere He was born. . . .

No, no, your King's not yet to seek
  Where to repose His royal head;
See, see how soon His new-bloom'd cheek
  'Twixt mother's breasts is gone to bed!
Sweet choice, said we; no way but so,
Not to lie cold, yet sleep in snow! . . .

Welcome—tho' not to those gay flies,
  Gilded i' th' beams of earthly kings,
Slippery souls in smiling eyes—
  But to poor shepherds, homespun things,
Whose wealth's their flocks, whose wit's to be
Well read in their simplicity. . . .

RICHARD CRASHAW, 1612–1649
A Hymn Sung as by the Shepherds

THE SUN IN WINTER

BUT so have I seen the sun kiss the frozen earth, which was bound up with the images of death and the colder breath of the North; and then the waters break from their enclosures and melt with joy and run in useful channels; and the flies do rise again from their little graves in walls, and dance awhile in the air, to tell that there is joy within, and that the great mother of creatures will open the stock of her new refreshment, become useful to mankind, and sing praises to her Redeemer.

JEREMY TAYLOR, 1613–1667

THE KING'S PROGRESS

YET if his majesty our sovereign lord
Should of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say, 'I'll be your guest to-morrow night,'
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work! 'Let no man idle stand.
Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall;
See they be fitted all;
Let there be room to eat,
And order taken that there want no meat.

See every sconce and candlestick made bright,
That without tapers they may give a light.
Look to the presence: are the carpets spread,
The dais o'er the head,
The cushions in the chairs,
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?
Perfume the chambers, and in any case
Let each man give attendance in his place!'

Thus if the king were coming we would do,
And 'twere good reason too;
For 'tis a duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
And after all our travail and our cost,
So he be pleased to think no labour lost.
But at the coming of the King of Heaven
All's set at six and seven:
We wallow in our sin,
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn.
We entertain Him always like a stranger,
And as at first still lodge Him in the manger.

ANON.
Christ Church MS., K. 3, 43-5

A LYKE-WAKE DIRGE

THIS ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and sleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

When thou from hence away art past,
Every nighte and alle,
To Whinny-muir thou comest at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,
Every nighte and alle,
Sit thee down and put them on;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane,
Every nighte and alle,
Thy whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Whinny-muir that thou may'st pass,
Every nighte and alle,
To Brig o' Dread thou comest at last,
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Brig o' Dread that thou may'st pass,
Every nighte and alle,
To Purgatory fire thou com'st at last,
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gavest meat or drink,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire sall never make thee shrink,
And Christe receive thy saule.

It meat and drink thou ne'er gav'st nane
Every nighte and alle,
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane,
And Christe receive thy saule.

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and sleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

ANON.

ST. AGNES EVE

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows
Are sparkling to the moon:
My breath to heaven like vapour goes:
May my soul follow soon!
The shadows of the convent-towers
Slant down the snowy sward,
Still creeping with the creeping hours
That lead me to my Lord:
Make thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
To yonder shining ground;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee;
So in mine earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be.
Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors;
The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strows her lights below,
And deepens on and up! the gates
Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
To make me pure of sin.—
The sabbaths of Eternity,
One sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
The bridegroom and his bride!

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON, 1809–1892

NOËL

Le ciel est noir, la terre est blanche;
Cloches, carillonnez gaîment!
Jésus est né; la Vierge penche
Sur lui son visage charmant.

Pas de courtines festonnées
Pour préserver l'enfant du froid;
Rien que les toiles d'araignées
Qui pendent des poutres du toit.

Il tremble sur la paille fraîche,
Ce cher petit enfant Jésus,
Et pour l'échauffer dans sa crèche
L'âne et le bœuf soufflent dessus.

La neige au chaume pend ses franges,
Mais sur le toit s'ouvre le Ciel,
Et, tout en blanc, le chœur des anges
Chante aux bergers: 'Noël! Noël!'

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER, 1811–1872

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

CHRISTMAS EVE

I

Out of the little chapel I burst
Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes full, I waited first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre
At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter.
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
One sheep more to the rest in fold,

And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Six feet long by three feet wide,
Partitioned off from the vast inside—
  I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy; the rain kept driving.
  They eyed me much as some wild beast,
That congregation, still arriving.
Some of them by the main road, white
A long way past me into the night,
Skirting the common, then diverging;
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,
—They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder;—
But the most turned in yet more abruptly
  From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
  Which now the little chapel rallies
And leads into day again,—its priestliness
Lending itself to hide their beastliness
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
  That, where you cross the common as I did,
  And meet the party thus presided,
'Mount Zion' with Love-lane at the back of it,
They front you as little disconcerted
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
And her wicked people made to mind him,
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

II

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
  Her umbrella with a mighty report,
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
  A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,

Like a startled horse, at the interloper
(Who humbly knew himself improper,
But could not shrink up small enough)
—Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
Hinge's invariable scold
Making my very blood run cold.
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many tattered
Little old-faced peaking sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on:
  Then, stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
  Close on her heels, the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
  With lips as much too white, as a streak
  Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
  I got the same interrogation—
'What, you the alien, you have ventured
  To take with us, the elect, your station?
A carer for none of it, a Gallio!'—
  Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance
  As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho.
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,

The draught, it always sent in shutting,
Made the flame of the single tallow candle
In the cracked square lantern I stood under,
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:
I verily fancied the zealous light
(In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
With the airs of a Saint John's Candlestick.[1]
There was no standing it much longer.
'Good folks,' thought I, as resolve grew stronger,
'This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor
When the weather sends you a chance visitor?
You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!
But still, despite the pretty perfection
To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
And, taking God's word under wise protection,
Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
And bid one reach it over hot ploughshares,—
Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,
If I should choose to cry, as now, "Shares!"—
See if the best of you bars me my ration!
I prefer, if you please, for my expounder
Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder;
Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest
Supposing I don the marriage vestiment:
So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,
And carve me my portion at your quickliest!'
Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad
With wizened face in want of soap,
And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
And so avoid disturbing the preacher)
—Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
At the shutting door, and entered likewise,
Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
And found myself in full conventicle,

[1] *See* Rev. i. 20.

—To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
  Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
  Found all assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III

I very soon had enough of it.
  The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
  Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
  Of the preaching man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
  To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
  To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:
  No sooner our friend had got an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
(Whene'er 'twas the thought first struck him,
How death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench)
Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
  As to hug the book of books to pieces:
And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
  Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,
Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt yours—
So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
  Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
  Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'Tis odds but I might have borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered
  Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
  Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,

As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
  And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
While she, to his periods keeping measure,
  Maternally devoured the pastor.
The man with the handkerchief untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking!
My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it;
  So, saying like Eve when she plucked the apple,
  'I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,'
I flung out of the little chapel.

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812–1889

SAINT BRANDON

SAINT BRANDON sails the northern main;
  The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again;
  So late!—such storms!—The Saint is mad!

He heard across the howling seas,
  Chime convent-bells on wintry nights;
He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,
  Twinkle the monastery-lights.

But north, still north, Saint Brandon steer'd—
  And now no bells, no convents move!
The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,
  The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night;
  Stars shone after a day of storm)—
He sees float past an iceberg white,
  And on it—Christ—a living form.

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
  Of hair that red and tufted fell—
It is—Oh where shall Brandon fly!
  The traitor Judas, out of hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandon sate;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly: 'Wait!
By high permission I am here.

'One moment wait, thou holy man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew;
My name is under all men's ban—
Ah, tell them of my respite too!

'Tell them, one blessed Christmas night—
(It was the first after I came,
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

'I felt, as I in torment lay
'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
An angel touch mine arm, and say:
Go hence and cool thyself an hour!

' "Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?" I said.
" The Leper recollect," said He,
" Who asked the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity."

'Then I remembered how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust with burning heat;

'And in the street a leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, old;
Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,
The hot wind fever'd him five-fold.

'He gazed upon me as I passed
And murmur'd: Help me, or I die!—
To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

'Oh, Brandon, think what grace divine,
What blessing must full goodness shower
When fragment of it small, like mine,
Hath such inestimable power.

'Well-fed, well-clothed, well friended, I
  Did that chance act of good, that one!
Then went my way to kill and die—
  Forgot my good as soon as done.

'That germ of kindness, in the womb
  Of mercy caught, did not expire;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
  And friends me in the pit of fire.

'Once every year, when carols wake,
  On earth, the Christmas night's repose,
Arising from the sinners' lake,
  I journey to these healing snows.

'I stanch with ice my burning breast,
  With silence balm my whirling brain,
O Brandon! to this hour of rest
  That Joppan leper's ease was pain.'—

Tears started to Saint Brandon's eyes;
  He bow'd his head, he breathed a prayer—
Then look'd, and lo, the frosty skies!
  The iceberg, and no Judas there!

MATTHEW ARNOLD, 1822–1888

THE WISE MEN

STEP softly, under snow or rain,
  To find the place where men can pray;
The way is all so very plain
  That we may lose the way.

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore
  On tortured puzzles from our youth,
We know all labyrinthine lore,
We are the three wise men of yore,
  And we know all things but the truth.

We have gone round and round the hill,
  And lost the wood among the trees,
And learnt long names for every ill,
And served the mad gods, naming still
  The Furies the Eumenides.

GOD AND MARY'S WINTER

The gods of violence took the veil
  Of vision and philosophy,
The serpent that brought all men bale,
He bites his own accursed tail,
  And calls himself Eternity.

Go humbly . . . it has hailed and snowed . . .
  With voices low and lanterns lit;
So very simple is the road,
  That we may stray from it.

The world grows terrible and white,
  And blinding white the breaking day;
We walk bewildered in the light,
For something is too large for sight,
  And something much too plain to say.

The Child that was ere worlds begun
  (. . . We need but walk a little way,
We need but see a latch undone . . .)
The Child that played with moon and sun
  Is playing with a little hay.

The house from which the heavens are fed,
  The old strange house that is our own,
Where tricks of words are never said,
And Mercy is as plain as bread,
  And honour is as hard as stone.

Go humbly; humble are the skies,
  And low and large and fierce the Star;
So very near the Manger lies
  That we may travel far.

Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes
  To roar to the resounding plain,
And the whole heaven shouts and shakes,
  For God Himself is born again,
And we are little children walking
  Through the snow and rain.

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON, 1874–

CHRISTMAS MINIATURE

I SEE a great white space, in the midst of it Christmas,
A shrine of coloured candles on the King's highway ;
And He who sits in state is our own quiet Jesus,
And she who lights the tallow-wicks, May.

For Mary hath her roses and bluebells in December,
All dewy is her gown with the Spring.
I see it all plain in the Yuletide ember,
Round her the merry birds sing ;

One of them has feathers like a little yellowhammer,
One of them is azure as the day ;
And a green thrush hops on a white woolly lamb ;
While round them the angels play.

On sackbut and psaltery and castanets,
On tibia and tambourine and lyre.
And seven little alabaster minarets
See I, too, in the forest of the fire.

HERBERT E. PALMER.

EPILOGUE

September, leaning backward, in that strange year
looked in the eyes of summer and forgot
(or did not care) that so Queen Guinevere
had walked with Lancelot.

her minstrels of the Court, the thrush, the wren,
and April's blackbird under autumn leaves
with rapture mad, or feigned, sang back again
green dawns and golden eves,

as though the winter were an idle tale,
and never leaves would fall nor throats be dumb,
nor even the heart change, nor beauty fail,
nor Arthur ever come,

as though in some immortal reckoning
an instant of light outlasts an age of dark,
and death stood still to hear the thrushes sing—
as these are singing. Hark!

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